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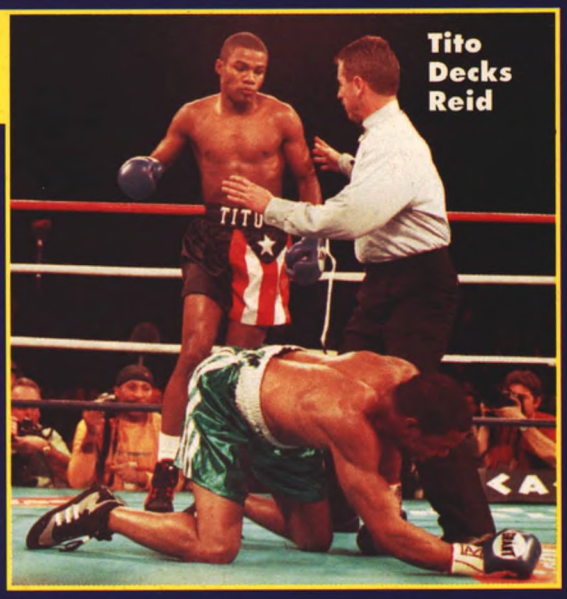

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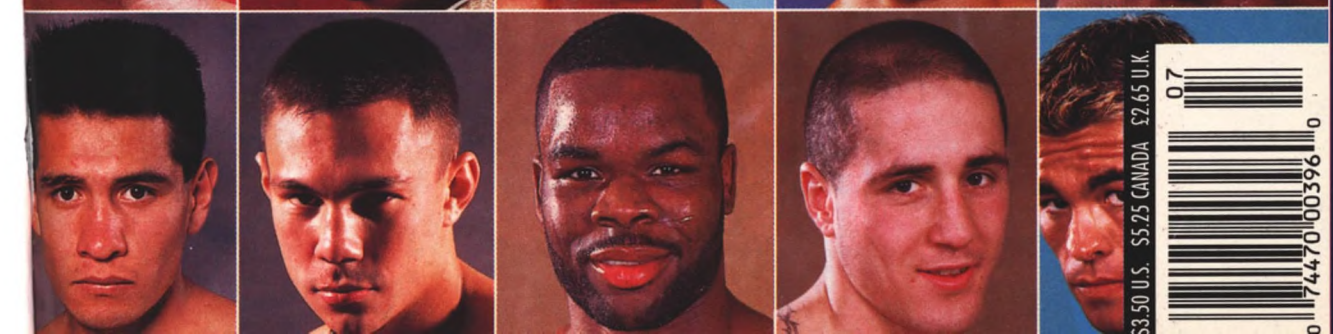
JULY 2000

THE STATE OF THE GAME!

Our Exclusive Annual Report



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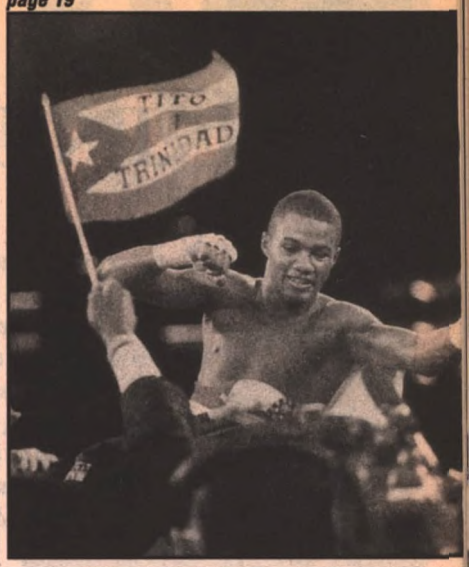

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RINGSIDE

Sometimes you hate to be right. I felt that way sitting ringside at Madison Square Garden on February 26, watching Arturo Gatti end the career of Joey Gamache with one of the most devastating knockouts I've seen in more than a quarter of a century on the boxing beat.

In the March 1999 issue, in a "Ringside" editorial urging the return of same-day weigh-ins, I wrote that the current method of allowing fighters to make weight anywhere from 24 to 36 hours before the fight "makes a mockery of the very concept that is supposed to be insuring [the fighters'] safety and the fairness of the fight." What happened to Gamache only reinforced my opinion.

The fact that Gatti gained 19 pounds between the weigh-in and the fight, along with alleged irregularities at the weigh-in *(see page 8)*, has prompted the Manhattan District Attorney's office to launch an investigation. But that's not going to help Gamache, who spent two days in the hospital with a concussion, and was advised by his doctors to never fight again.

There are those, the Nevada boxing commission among them, who think the answer is additional weigh-ins. The idea calls for the fighters to step on the scale again immediately before they climb into the ring. Supposedly, there will be a ceiling on the number of pounds a fighter will be allowed to gain, most likely the equivalent of one division. But what if one or both of the fighters fail to meet this new standard? Is the commission going to call off the show after the fighters have already made the contractual weight at the official weigh-in? Not likely, especially if it's a high-profile fight with hundreds of thousands, maybe millions, of dollars at stake.

This hair-brained scheme is just another gimmick, an invitation to all sorts of complications. The solution is simple: Go back to same-day weigh-ins. Yes, the careers of certain fighters will be hampered, but overall the sport will benefit tremendously. What took place between Gatti and Gamache wasn't a sporting event; it was a sanctioned mugging that brought nothing but dishonor on the game. Returning to a tried and true method is the best way to ensure it doesn't happen again.

***

As regular readers know, I have been writing a series of articles on the career of David Reid entitled "The Golden Road To Stardom." The series started shortly after Reid won a gold medal at the 1996 Olympics and has continued through 10 installments, the most recent of which was carried in the December '99 issue and dealt with "The American Dream's" first defense of the WBA super welterweight title.

Considering the ongoing series, there was a temptation to write the story of the Felix Trinidad-Reid fight from Reid's point of view. But that wouldn't be fair to Trinidad, who came off the floor to deliver one of the finest performances of his career. That doesn't mean I intend to gloss over Reid's first pro defeat or fail to ask all the tough questions that arise from such a crushing setback. But you won't be able to read the 11th installment of "The Golden Road To Stardom" until the next issue. This month belongs to the winner.

***

It was incorrectly reported in *The Ring's 2000 Boxing Almanac And Book Of Facts* that Jack Guggino was fired by Florida Governor Jeb Bush on March 10, 1999, for taking $100,000 from Don King and then trying to influence the rest of the regulatory board to help the promoter. Our report was incorrect since Governor Bush removed a member other than Jack Guggino from the Commission. The Governor took no action regarding Dr. Guggino and Dr. Guggino was not alleged to have influenced other Commission members. We regret the error.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

Volume 79, No. 7 **July 2000**

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London Publishing Co.
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Marion, OH 43306-8121
(740) 375-2335

THE RING (ISSN: 0035-5410), Vol. 79, No. 7, is published monthly, with an additional issue in December, by London Publishing Co., 7002 W. Butler Pike, Ambler, PA 19002. Periodicals postage paid at Ambler, PA 19002 and additional post offices. Postmaster: Send change of address notices to: THE RING, P.O. Box 2029, Dept. 9, Marion, OH 43306-8121. Single copy price $3.50 ($5.25 in Canada, £2.65 in U.K.). Subscription price $32.45 in the U.S., $42.85 Canada and remaining countries. Not responsible for the loss or non-return of unsolicited articles or photographs, which will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed envelope bearing the proper amount of postage. The entire contents of this magazine are copyright ©2000 London Publishing Co. No part of this magazine may be reproduced without the written permission of the publisher. All rights reserved. FOR ADVERTISING INQUIRIES AND RATES: (215) 643-6385. U.S. and Canadian distribution by Kable News Inc., 641 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10022. International distribution by Worldwide Media Service Inc., 115 East 23rd St., New York, NY 10010, U.K. distribution by Comag, Tavistock Rd., West Drayton, Middlesex UB77QE, England.
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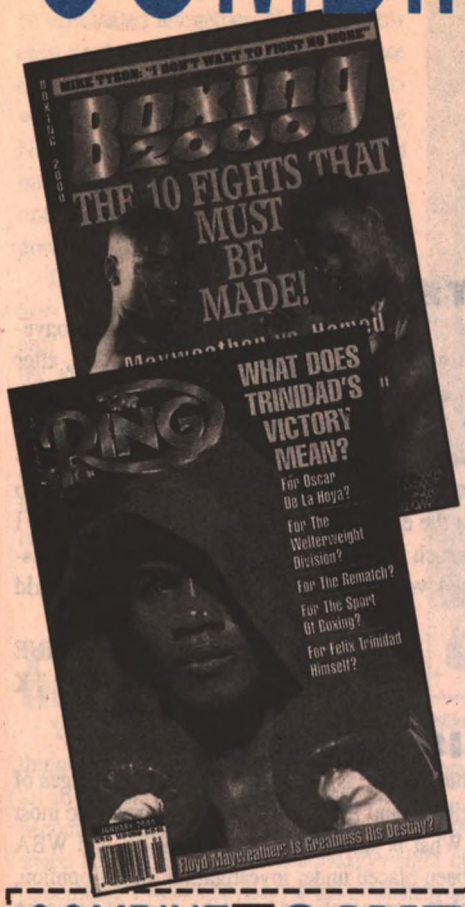

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COME OUT WRITING

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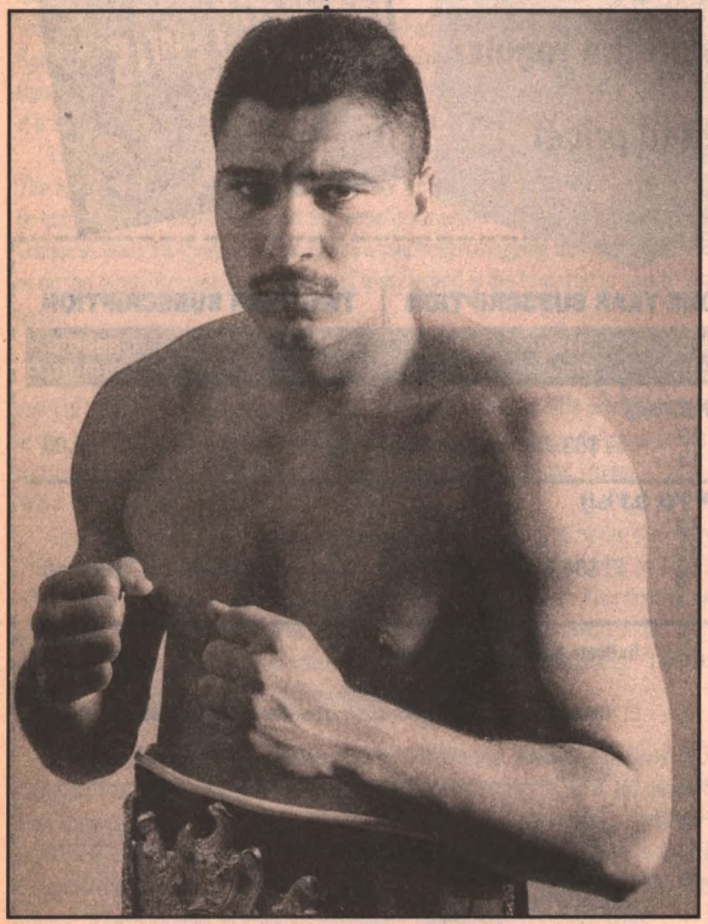
HEAVYWEIGHT DEBATE

Once again, THE RING runs a Jack Dempsey article ("The Ring Classic," March 2000) that conveniently skips over the fact that Dempsey was a racist who refused to fight black boxers. This, after publishing the ridiculous opinion that Larry Holmes and George Foreman would easily beat Jack Johnson. Holmes made his name fighting a nearly 40-year-old Muhammad Ali, Gerry Cooney, Renaldo Snipes, and various blown-up light heavyweights. George Foreman does not warrant discussion either. Jack Johnson, in my opinion, was the greatest heavyweight of the 20th century. To fight and defeat white men and then laugh at them in the early-20th century is just too incredible. I can hardly comprehend it. The Jess Willard fight was such a fix that I will not even debate that question. Of course, sportswriters of that era refused to believe it was a fix. They wanted a white world champion.

OTTO LEVINE
Austin, TX



Why, wonders reader Patrick Mascoe, do the WBC and WBA rank John "The Quiet Man" Ruiz above the likes of Michael Grant, David Tua, and Oleg Maskaev? Mascoe admits that he's never even heard of Ruiz.

WHO IS JOHN RUIZ?

The fact that the IBF is under investigation on charges of corruption, bribery, and fraud probably is no surprise to most boxing fans. What is surprising is that the WBC and WBA haven't also been placed under investigation. In my opinion, all the alphabet organizations must be corrupt to some degree. How else could one explain their asinine rankings? Take, for example, John Ruiz, who is ranked number one by the WBC, number two by the WBA, and number three by the IBF, and yet not ranked at all by THE RING.

Ruiz is ranked ahead of Michael Grant, David Tua, Mike Tyson, Andrew Golota, Vitaly Klitschko, and Oleg Maskaev, even though, as an avid boxing fan, I have never heard of him, nor do I know anyone who has. If the major boxing organizations are not basing their rankings on performance and the level of competition, then what are their rankings actually based on?

PATRICK MASCOE
Nepean, Ontario

AN ALPHABET BACKER

The first Holyfield-Lewis fight should be remembered for the horrible scoring and the truly lackluster performances of the two heavyweight champions. Instead, it will be remembered for becoming the launching pad for boxing commentators to start a new American sport: bashing sanctioning bodies.

Every broadcast brings an opportunity for commentators and studio personalities to voice their own opinions about

what should or should not be done with sanctioning bodies, rankings, and title belts. Hold on a minute! Commentators are telling me that title belts aren't important and sanctioning bodies should be eliminated altogether. Honestly, how easy do they think it will be to convince Stevie Johnston that the WBC lightweight title isn't important? Try telling Naseem Hamed that his WBO belt is insignificant. He won't even fight anyone that has true talent and punching power for fear of losing the belt.

If there were no sanctioning bodies, how would we know who the champions are? There would be no one to actually try and rate all of the boxers in the world. Who would be in charge of determining the significance of a bout? The current system may not be perfect, but at least it gives some assemblage to an otherwise free-for-all enterprise.

STEPHANIE ALEGRIA
Reno, NV

Mike Tyson will return to the heavyweight throne, forecasts reader Frank Grech. Tyson, pictured knocking out Trevor Berbick in 1986 to become the youngest heavyweight champ ever, showed no signs of ring rust in his two-round rout of Britain's Julius Francis.

TYSON WILL RISE AGAIN

You can't be certain of too many things in boxing, but I have no doubt at all in predicting that Mike Tyson will become world champion again. Tyson is returning to the kind of shape he was in when he was heavyweight champion. Everyone remembers Tyson's heyday, when he destroyed everyone who was put in front of him in the ring.

They say you can't turn back the clock, but I've seen enough convincing evidence recently to feel that Tyson is doing precisely that. To win the world title back, Tyson may have to beat Lennox Lewis. Lewis is a tremendous champion, but I just have a feeling Tyson is better. He has the kind of power that can hurt someone like Lewis. Mark my words, Tyson will be back. He has a vast army of supporters and I can clearly say that the public really wants him and boxing needs him.

FRANK GRECH
Malta Republic

LOW ON LEWIS

I read your cover story in the March 2000 issue ("Lennox Lewis: The Champ For The New Millennium ... Or Just For The Moment?") and have a few thoughts. If Lewis had as much on the inside as he does in skills and physical stature, he'd be hurting fighters. Lewis' reign will be very brief. First of all, he did not defeat Evander Holyfield in their second fight. Just like you take one day at a time, you score one round at a time, without giving thought to previous fights. Just because Lewis was robbed the first time they met, there is no reason for these judges to give Lewis a decision he did not earn.

So go ahead and write Holyfield off, as you have in the past. If given a third match against Lewis, I believe Holyfield would find a way to stop Lewis or do enough damage to win a decision. "The Warrior" is destined to become the first man in history to capture the heavyweight title four times. Watch and see.

JEFF LeHEW
Martinsburg, WV

IF OSCAR WERE UGLY ...

This letter is in response to the letter "Follow Oscar's Lead" (March 2000) from Tracy Jenkins. First of all, I'm not sure Oscar De La Hoya would have such loyal female support if he looked like Jorge Paez. Let's face it girls, you all love Oscar because he's Ricky Martin with boxing gloves. To say otherwise would be like me saying *V.I.P.* is my favorite TV show because of Pamela Anderson's acting.

On another level, after the atrocious scoring in Oscar's "victory" over Pernell Whitaker and the nod he received in the Ike Quartey fight, Oscar and his fans have no business whining and bellyaching over Felix "Tito" Trinidad's victory. Oscar did not get robbed. Rather, he made a tactical error. He followed the advice of his corner given by Gil Clancy and Roberto Alcazar in a fight where everything was at stake. If Oscar wants to win a rematch, he better dump those two in favor of someone like Emanuel Steward.

DAN ALMEIDA
Santa Fe, NM

[Editor's Note: Clancy was ousted from De La Hoya's corner shortly before the Derrell Coley fight.] ■

ROUND ONE

A CONTROVERSIAL POUNDING

Officially, the Arturo Gatti-Joey Gamache fight on February 26 at Madison Square Garden ended 41 seconds into the second round, when a dazzling three-punch combination stretched Gamache out on his back, prompting referee Benji Estevez to wave the fight off without a count. But there are those who will say the fight was really over about 27 hours before it started, when Gatti stepped on and off the scale too quickly to convince every observer that he had made the contracted weight of 141 pounds. And regardless of whether he made the weight or not, Gatti entered the ring the following night at 160 pounds, giving him a 14-pound advantage over Gamache that transformed a reasonably competitive fight on paper into a brutal mismatch.

When Gatti stood on the scale, there were many in attendance who questioned whether the beam leveled off to indicate that the Canadian brawler's weight matched where the scale was set. Gamache's manager, Johnny Bos, shouted that the scales were rigged. Gamache's trainer, Jimmy Glenn, yelled, "You didn't make the weight!" Leonard Langley, the manager of Derrell Coley, said, "They're doing it again," referring to his belief that moments earlier, Coley's opponent, Oscar De La Hoya, was afforded the same leniency by the New York State Athletic Commission. According to Wallace Matthews of the *New York Post*, Tony Russo, the executive director of the commission and the man working the scale, simply told Bos and the others to "stop making a fuss."

And so the latest controversy regarding weight-making was born, and Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau seized the athletic commission's records from the show a few days later. There are two different issues being disputed here, and both are quite serious. The first is whether the athletic commission is bending over backward to help the guys perceived as the favorites, the ones who draw fans to the arena and to HBO. And the other is whether weighing in the day before the fight is really a practice that leads to increased fighter safety. In the case of Gatti-Gamache, only one fighter was protected by the system; the other suffered a severe concussion and has since announced his retirement. Gamache has also gone on to sue the NYSAC for $5-million.

Photo by Marty Rosengarten

Did the beam ever level off?

One fact supporting the Gatti side's claim that he did make the weight—or at least refuting Bos' belief that he couldn't have put on 19 pounds that quickly—is the former IBF junior lightweight champ's history of putting on absurd amounts of weight before fight time. In fact, in his previous fight, against Reyes Munoz last August, Gatti weighed 139 the day before the bout (assuming that weigh-in can be completely believed), and still came into the ring at 160. So we know he *can* put on that much weight. Now the question is whether he should be allowed to.

"Arturo Gatti was a perfect example of the inequities of allowing someone to gain that much weight and fight a much smaller opponent," said Nevada State Athletic Commission physician Flip Homansky, who was ringside for the Gatti-Gamache fight. The Nevada commission is working on setting standards for how much weight a fighter can gain between the weigh-in and the fight, a plan that, in the name of safety, can only help. The idea in boxing, as in all sports, is that the better man, not just the bigger man, wins.

—Eric Raskin

CHUCK HULL, 1924-2000

Ring announcer Hull dies at 75

The Sweet Science lost one of its best-ever ring announcers when Chuck Hull, 75, took the final count on February 15, 2000, the victim of an apparent heart attack. During a career that ran from 1954 until 1995, Hull introduced the fighters in thousands of fights, including the participants in 130 world championship bouts.

Throughout the late-1970s and most of the '80s, Hull was the sport's premier mike man, working some of the biggest fights of the era, including Leon Spinks' upset of Muhammad Ali, the first Ray Leonard-Thomas Hearns fight, and the Marvin Hagler-Hearns shootout. He was also the ring announcer at the '84 Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

Born in Jacksonville, Illinois, Hull got his start at a Del Rio, Texas, radio station where he called quarter horse races and high school basketball. In '52 he became sports director for KLAS Radio in Las Vegas. His first world championship fight was the Benny "Kid" Paret-Don Jordan welterweight title fight in May '60. During his Vegas years, Hull also worked as a casino pit boss.

With his thick mane of silver hair and immaculately tailored tuxedos, Hull cut a rather dashing figure. But it was his smooth delivery, perfect diction, and minimalist approach—no "let's ready to rumble" crap—that endeared him to boxing purists.

"The one thing I keep in mind is that the ring announcer is not the star," Hull once told THE RING. "The boxers are the ones who should be in the spotlight."

—Nigel Collins

CAT SCRATCH FEVER

Fans of women's boxing have long yearned to see a mega-bout between Christy Martin and Lucia Rijker. As it turned out, a few people at a musty Los Angeles gym got a chance, however brief, to see the two go at it. It wasn't, however, the way most expected or wanted.

Martin was preparing for a March 3 fight with Belinda Laracuente on the undercard of the Felix Trinidad-David Reid bout at Caesars Palace. She had flown to L.A. on February 28 for a public workout at the Los Angeles Boxing Gym designed to try to hype the fight. But shortly after Martin finished a television interview, Rijker appeared, and before long the two were rolling around on the floor in a brawl. A few moments later, another brief skirmish broke out as Martin managed to shake free from the men who were restraining her.

"I had just finished the interview and tried to get past her and I never said anything to her," Martin said. "I tried to step around her because I didn't want trouble. But she took a cheap shot and hit me on my blind side. It didn't faze me, and I guess that's got to have her worried. If that's as good as she can punch, that girl has problems." Martin said she didn't want to fight because she knew she would risk injury and the payday for her bout with Laracuente.

Rijker, predictably, had a different story. She said she went to the workout out of curiosity, but said Martin provoked her. Rijker said Martin called her a name that the undefeated woman from the Netherlands declined to repeat and then shoved her. Rijker said that is what caused her to react by throwing a left that landed on "The Coal Miner's Daughter's" cheek.

"I didn't want any trouble," Rijker said. "I want to fight Christy in the ring, when we both get paid for it, when it's worth something. But she kept it up and kept it up, and when she shoved me like that, I had to defend myself."

Martin is probably the world's most well-known women's boxer, while Rijker is usually considered the best woman pound-for-pound. Martin said she knows Rijker needs her to make a big payday and thought about refusing to fight Rijker out of spite, but said she opted against that.

"It would be a big payday for me, too," Martin said. "Rijker seems to make a career of telling the media she wants to fight me, but does she really want to fight me? You tell me. She hasn't come up with any offers, and if she wanted me so badly, I think that would have been taken care of."

—Kevin Iole

Martin and Rijker: More than ready to rumble

TV FIGHTS OF THE MONTH

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
2-18-00	Angel Manfredy KO 4 Sean Fletcher	ESPN2	l	B	C-	B-
Manfredy impressive, but not as much fun since he lost the "El Diablo" get-up						
2-19-00	**Erik Morales W 12 Marco Antonio Barrera**	**HBO**	**WBC jf**	**A**	**A+**	**A+**
They don't come any better than this folks, even with Dalby Shirley's horrendous scoring						
2-25-00	Andrew Murray W 10 Larry Marks	ESPN2	w	C+	B+	C
Marks tastes Murray's power early, fights to survive rest of the way						
2-25-00	Ray Oliveira W 10 Vivian Harris	ESPN2	jw	B-	B+	B-
Upset! Veteran Oliveira takes Harris to school; anyone else see the bull's-eye on Harris' forehead?						
2-26-00	Arturo Gatti KO 2 Joey Gamache	HBO	w	B+	C+	C-
Did someone slip in a tape of Max Schmeling-Mickey Walker when we weren't looking?						
2-26-00	Oscar De La Hoya KO 7 Derrell Coley	HBO	w	A	C	B-
De La Hoya chops Coley down, stops him with bodyshot; Mosley up next						
3-3-00	Christy Martin W 8 Belinda Laraquente	PPV	jw	C	B+	C
Is it us, or is Martin starting to look like Butterbean in drag?						
3-3-00	William Joppy W 10 Fernando Zuniga	PPV	sm	B-	D	D+
Joppy takes decision in dull, sloppy fight; who does he think he is, Keith Holmes?						
3-3-00	**Felix Trinidad W 12 David Reid**	**PPV**	**WBA jm**	**A+**	**A**	**B+**
Trinidad tortures Reid late, establishes himself as force at junior middle						
3-3-00	Robert Frazier W 10 Jose Antonio Rivera	ESPN2	jm	C	B	C
Frazier fades late but holds on to take nod over game but outclassed Rivera						
3-3-00	**Paul Spadafora W 12 Victoriano Sosa**	**ESPN2**	**IBF l**	**A-**	**C**	**B**
Floored twice and nearly stopped in third, Spadafora recovers to score close win						
3-4-00	Danny Romero KO 5 Adarryl Johnson	PPV	jf	C+	D	C+
Romero may not be all the way back, but he's getting there						
3-4-00	Oba Carr KO 8 Yory Boy Campas	PPV	jm	B+	A	B-
Guess Carr never heard the old adage, don't hook with a hooker; Campas destroyed						
3-4-00	**Bones Adams W 12 Nestor Garza**	**PPV**	**WBA jf**	**A-**	**B-**	**B+**
Adams comes through with best performance of career against flat Garza						
3-4-00	**Paulie Ayala W 12 Johnny Bredahl**	**PPV**	**WBA b**	**A-**	**C+**	**C**
Ayala gets debatable decision against light-hitting but hungry Dane						
3-5-00	Robbie Peden W 12 Carlos Rios	FOXSN	jl	C	B+	D-
Peden survives ugly, foul-filled brawl to take split decision						
3-11-00	Mickey Ward KO 8 Shea Neary	HBO	jw	B+	A	A
Ward prevails again in another tough, exciting scrap; is Gatti next?						
3-11-00	Naseem Hamed KO 4 Vuyani Bungu	HBO	f	A	B+	B
What is it about Hamed that makes good fighters forget how to fight?						
3-17-00	**Stevie Johnston KO 2 Julio Alvarez**	**ESPN2**	**WBC l**	**A**	**C+**	**B+**
Johnston shines in front of hometown crowd, blitzes Alvarez for rare easy win						
3-18-00	**Diego Corrales KO 3 Derrick Gainer**	**HBO**	**IBF jl**	**A-**	**A**	**D**
Gainer wasn't going to win this one anyway, but he deserved the chance to try						
3-18-00	**Floyd Mayweather W 12 Goyo Vargas**	**HBO**	**WBC jl**	**A**	**B-**	**C-**
"Pretty Boy Floyd" masterful but dull against iron-chinned Vargas						
3-19-00	Ben Tackie W 10 Golden Johnson	FOXSN	l	C	B+	B+
Late-sub Tackie floors Johnson in fifth and cruises to unanimous decision						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(World title fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

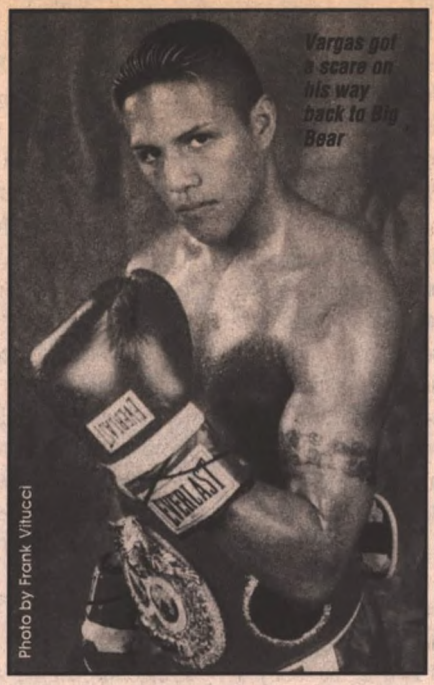
Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN–Fox SportsNet; Uni–Univision

VARGAS' FAR-FROM-FANTASTIC VOYAGE

It was supposed to just be a pleasant, relaxing weekend away from training camp for IBF junior middleweight champ Fernando Vargas. He went to Las Vegas, took in the Felix Trinidad-David Reid fight on March 3, met with the press the next morning, and then took a plane to Ontario, California, about 50 miles away from his camp in Big Bear. So far, so good. But the rain was coming down in Ontario, which usually translates into snow on Big Bear Mountain. And that, in turn, translated into a normally routine trip becoming an absolute nightmare.

Vargas was with his co-manager, Rolando Arellano, and his new strength and conditioning coach, John Philbin, and upon seeing the precipitation, Arellano asked the limo driver to check on the conditions on the mountain. The driver, who claimed to be a small-time pro wrestler, said that he did so, and that everything was clear. So off they went, cruising right along until they got halfway up the mountain, where state troopers told them they had to go back down because of the weather.

"That driver was an idiot," Vargas said. "I guess he lied about checking the conditions. And then, as we were going back down, it really started snowing hard, to the point where you can't even see in front of you. And instead of slowing down, the driver's speeding up! We were like, 'What are you doing?!'"



Vargas got a scare on his way back to Big Bear

Photo by Frank Vitucci

The driver, seemingly a graduate of the Angel Manfredy school of motor vehicle operation, allowed the limo to skid out dangerously close to the edges of the cliffs several times, prompting Vargas to even open his door and bail out once, thinking the limousine wasn't going to stop. Vargas and his crew had to get out of the car and push it away from the edges of the mountain a few times, before finally kicking the reckless wrestler out of the driver's seat.

"I finally said, 'You're not driving no more, bro,'" Vargas said. "So John Philbin took over for him, and he has bobsledding experience and knows how to drive in icy conditions, and it was smooth sailing the rest of the way down.

"Crazy things go through your mind when you're in a situation like that. I thought, *No, this ain't happening*. I was in disbelief. I was thinking about my son, thinking about if he'd be okay without me. I wouldn't say I was praying, but I was asking God in my head, *Is this the way I'm going to go?* It's just a situation you can't prepare for. In boxing, I can prepare for my opponents, I can get ready for fights. You can't get ready for things like this."

—Eric Raskin

THE BOXING BOOKSHELF

If you're wondering how to separate the truth from the Hollywood/Larry King/*Entertainment Tonight* spin on the case of former middleweight contender Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, your best bet is to read *Hurricane: The Miraculous Journey Of Rubin Carter* (Houghton Mifflin Company, 358 pages, $25 hardcover). While written with the authorization and cooperation of its subject, James S. Hirsch's excellent book is a straightforward and compelling account of Carter's life and wrongful imprisonment that, unlike the lavishly praised movie starring Denzel Washington as Carter and other recent things written and said about him, confers its halo without inventing or slanting the facts.

For instance, there is now the popular notion that Carter's 1966 conviction on three first-degree murder charges came at the zenith of a boxing career in which he had already been shafted in his title fight against Joey Giardello two years earlier. But in fact he had, by the time of his arrest, slipped to journeyman status, and while Hirsch notes that "a number of sportswriters who saw the [Giardello] fight thought Carter won" (including THE RING'S Ed Brennan, by the way), he goes on to concede that "challengers typically have to beat a champ decisively to win a decision, and Carter didn't."

Hirsch isn't afraid to show Carter's warts—his earlier problems with the law, the alcoholism that came after he was finally freed in the '80s—because they are part of the whole mosaic and make the Rubin Carter who overcame them an even more impressive figure today. (Although did he really deserve to be "the first boxer in history to win an honorary championship belt," from, predictably, the WBC in 1993?)

Not so impressive, and even downright spooky, is the Canadian cult—my word, but not too strong of one given Hirsch's account of their machinations—that was instrumental in winning Carter's freedom, and from which he ultimately needed to break away.

The Carter movie, like that championship belt, goes too far. Hirsch's diligent book is not so easy to debunk and dismiss, even by us law-and-order types.

—Pete Ehrmann

OUTSIDE THE ROPES

Bowe: Gets off easy

In late-February, North Carolina judge **Graham Mullen** sentenced former heavyweight champion **Riddick Bowe** to 30 days in prison with four years probation and six months house arrest for kidnapping his wife and five children in 1998—not bad for "Big Daddy" considering he could have been given up to two years behind bars. Give credit to lawyer **Johnnie Cochran** for convincing Mullen to reduce the sentence on account of brain damage suffered by Bowe in the ring. As a result, however, Mullen ordered Bowe not to do any boxing until his probation ends, effectively ending any chance of a foolish comeback ... A mistrial was declared in the murder trial of former heavyweight and cruiserweight contender **Henry Tillman** in mid-February. A Santa Monica, California, judge found that the prosecutor failed to disclose the full criminal record of a police informant who would be testifying against Tillman. Prosecutors are planning to retry Tillman, who is accused of murder and attempted murder in connection with a 1996 shooting ... **Tomar Locker**, who shot down Washington, D.C., middleweight **Reuben Bell** in the lobby of Washington Hospital Center in February '98, was found innocent by insanity by a D.C. jury in late-February ... **Vinny Pazienza** pleaded no contest in early-March to charges that he tried to punch a Pawtucket, Rhode Island, police officer who pulled him over for driving on the wrong side of the road earlier in the year. The penalty: Paz loses his driver's license for three months and must pay court costs and $250 to a crime victims' fund ... WBA welterweight champion **James Page** signed a managerial contract in February with rap music producer **James Prince**, who first made a splash on the boxing scene by signing **Floyd Mayweather** last year. Prince is rumored to be making inroads toward signing **Mike Tyson** as well ... Former middleweight champion **Joey Giardello** filed suit in mid-February against Universal Pictures, Beacon Communications, and Azoff Films, the makers of *The Hurricane*, for the film's allegedly inaccurate portrayal of his 1964 fight with **Rubin Carter** ... Top heavyweight **Vitaly Klitschko** became, according to his promoters, the first professional boxer ever to carry a doctor title (honorary titles not included) when he passed his doctoral thesis on "talent and sponsorship in sports" at the University of Kiev in late-February ... Three-time heavyweight champion **Evander Holyfield** finally settled his lengthy divorce battle with **Dr. Janice Holyfield** in early-March. The terms of the settlement were not released ... Speaking of Holyfield, "The Real Deal" was named Boxer of the Decade at ESPN's annual ESPY Awards show. **Roy Jones**, despite engaging in just two non-threatening fights in '99, was named Boxer of the Year, a reminder of how little attention ESPN pays to the fight game. Hey, **Max Kellerman**, tell your sister network to get on the ball ... Lastly, a sad note: Cable-TV mogul **Bill Daniels** died in early-March at the age of 79. The billionaire Daniels had sponsored heavyweight **Ron Lyle** back in the '70s, funded and co-founded the Denver Rocks, a team in the International Amateur Boxing League, and provided the cash to get nephew **Mat Tinley's** America Presents promotion off the ground in 1996. Daniels was also a former Golden Gloves champion.

Klitschko: Just call him "Doc"

THE PUNCHLINES

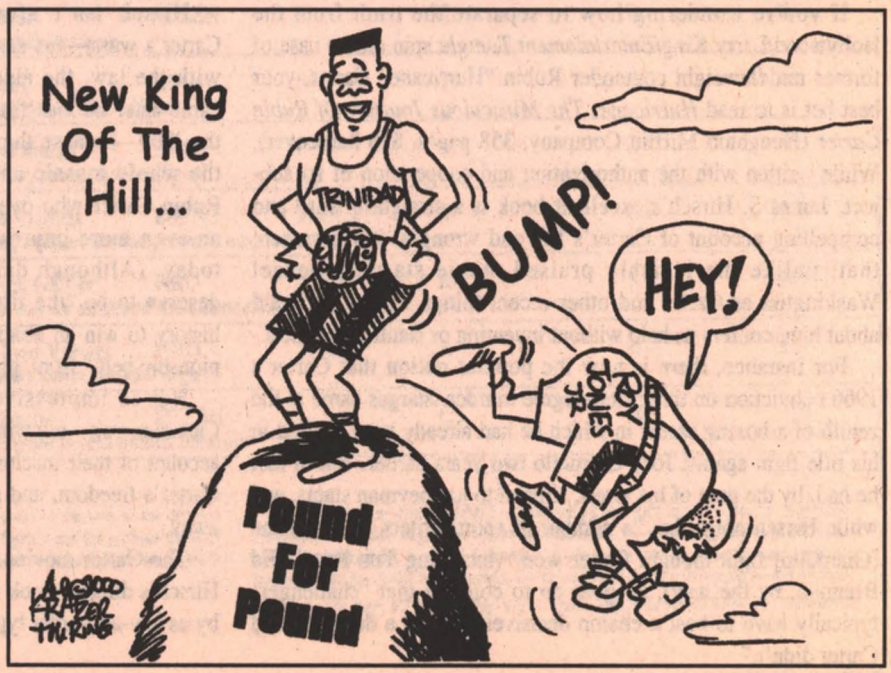
"I'm shocked, to tell you the truth. I figured we'd be a 3-l, 4-1 underdog. I was looking to bet this fight."

—Al Mitchell, trainer of David Reid, after learning that Reid had been picked to beat Felix Trinidad by a majority of those involved in a pre-fight media poll

"Fights are the nucleus of the evening. But atmosphere is important. I'm a single guy. I love to go out with the guys and talk nasty. In my heart, I believe that is what guys like to do."

—Promoter Cedric Kushner, on his monthly series at New York's Hammerstein Ballroom where there's an emphasis on drinking, smoking, and dancing women

AL KRATZER'S VIEW



"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

RATINGS ANALYSIS

(For period ended March 21, 2000)

POUND-FOR-POUND

1. **ROY JONES** Light Heavyweight
2. **FELIX TRINIDAD** Junior Middleweight
3. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER** Junior Lightweight
4. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** Welterweight
5. **SHANE MOSLEY** Welterweight
6. **MARK JOHNSON** Junior Bantamweight
7. **RICARDO LOPEZ** Junior Flyweight
8. **BERNARD HOPKINS** Middleweight
9. **STEVE JOHNSTON** Lightweight
10. **NASEEM HAMED** Featherweight

HEAVYWEIGHTS: As Ike Ibeabuchi (fourth last issue) hasn't fought since March 20, 1999, and still has some serious criminal charges pending, he's gone from the ratings. Everybody below the fourth spot moves up one notch, and Chris Byrd re-enters at number 10.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: No changes.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: Lou Del Valle (third last issue) departs because he hasn't fought since September 22, 1998. Everybody below moves up one notch, while Richard Hall is aboard at number 10.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No changes.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Armand Krajnc (seventh last issue) and Robert McCracken (previously sixth) switch places, as Krajnc has been more active than the Briton.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Due to his dominant decision over David Reid to win the WBA title, Felix Trinidad (number one at welter last issue) is installed at the number-one position. This bumps Fernando Vargas (first last issue) and Reid (formerly second) down to second and third, respectively. Former WBA boss Laurent Boudouani (third last issue) is gone following his retirement announcement. Also departing is Yory Boy Campas (eighth last issue), who suffered a TKO loss to Oba Carr. Tony Marshall returns at number 10.

WELTERWEIGHTS: Oscar De La Hoya (second last issue) is reinstated at number one now that Trinidad is fighting as a junior middle. Jose Luis Lopez exits due to inactivity, while Thomas Damgaard and Derrell Coley are installed at ninth and 10th, respectively.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: Mickey Ward's TKO of Shea Neary (ninth last issue) knocks Neary out of the ratings and raises Reggie Green (previously 10th) to ninth. Streaking Teddy Reid enters at 10th.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: Stefano Zoff (ninth last issue) exits, pushing James Leija (10th last issue) to ninth and making room for Victoriano Sosa, who came close to unseating IBF champ Paul Spadafora, at 10th.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: Derrick Gainer (ninth last issue) departs following his third-round TKO loss to IBF boss Diego Corrales, who stays at number two. Goyo Vargas (heretofore number 10) moves to nine due to his relatively strong bid to upset WBC kingpin Floyd Mayweather. Gainer's departure makes room for John Brown to return at number 10.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: Vuyani Bungu (fourth last issue) looked so bad against Naseem Hamed, he drops entirely out of the top 10. After all, he's only ever had one fight at 126, and was stopped in the fourth round. Juan Carlos Ramirez moves up from junior feather, where he was previously ranked, by stopping Wales' Steve Robinson. Ramirez is now ranked 10th at 126 pounds.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: Even though he lost on the official cards, Marco Antonio Barrera (second last issue) jumps over his supposed conqueror Erik Morales (previously first) to assume the top spot. Morales, who was extremely lucky to get the nod over Barrera, slips to second. Bones Adams came out of nowhere to take the WBA belt away from Nestor Garza (third last issue), and now holds Garza's old spot. Garza slides to sixth.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: Despite losing a majority decision to second-ranked Paulie Ayala in a bid for the WBA title, Johnny Bredahl (10th last issue) fought so well, he's moves up to number nine. Cuauhtemoc Gomez, one of the busiest fighters in any division, advances from ninth to eighth. Adan Vargas, who lost a title challenge to WBA champ Veerapol Sahaprom (number four), slumps from eighth to 10th.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: Even though Mark Johnson is currently incarcerated and has been stripped of the IBF title, there's a good chance he'll fight within a year of his most recent bout. Therefore, he stays at number one for the time being.

FLYWEIGHTS: No changes.

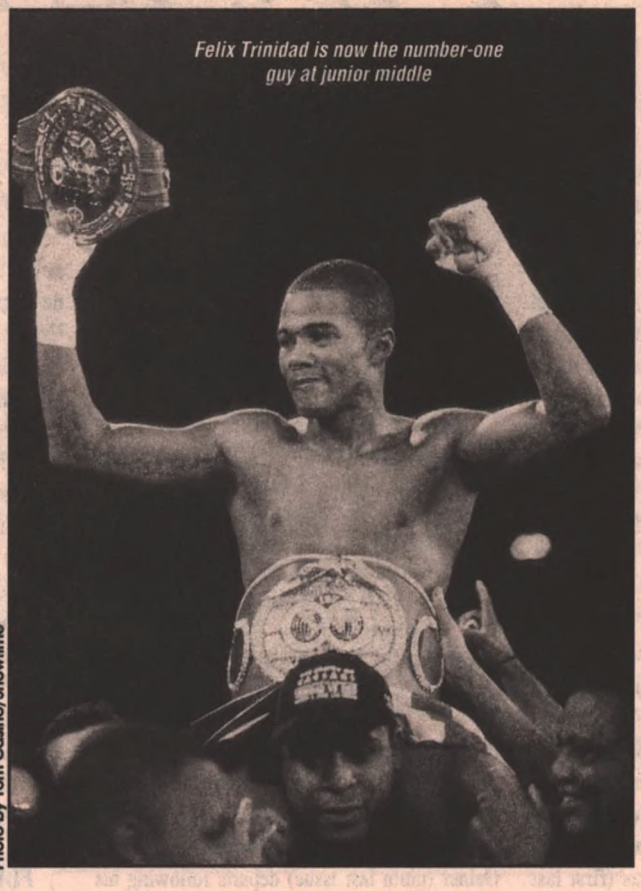
JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: Hawk Makepula (unranked last issue) topped fellow South African Baby Jake Matlala (sixth last issue) via close decision to take over the sixth position. Matlala drops a peg to seventh. Michael Carbajal (10th last issue) says he's retired again, and is dropped.

STRAWWEIGHTS: Jose Garcia (formerly seventh) sinks to ninth after losing a title bid to WBA champ Noel Arambulet (number four). Rocky Lin (seventh last issue) and Kermin Guardia (previously eighth) both move up one spot.

POUND-FOR-POUND: Trinidad moves from third to second on the strength of his big win over Reid, which forces Mayweather, who only looked so-so decisioning Vargas, down to third. Morales (eighth last issue) exits due to the beating he took from Barrera, and Hamed rejoins the elite group thanks to his impressive kayo of Bungu. ■

THE RING RATINGS

For Period Ended March 21, 2000



Felix Trinidad is now the number-one guy at junior middle

Photo by Tom Casino/Showtime

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

In each division, fighters are ranked according to their abilities and accomplishments.

Being champion does not necessarily mean a fighter will be rated at the top of his weight class.

These ratings reflect how the best fighters in the world rate against one another.

Ratings By The Editors

Records By Fight Fax Inc.

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Unlimited

1. **LENNOX LEWIS** England 35-1-1 (WBA/WBC/IBF Champ)
2. **EVANDER HOLYFIELD** Fairburn, GA 36-4-1
3. **MICHAEL GRANT** Norristown, PA 31-0
4. **DAVID TUA** Totowa, NJ 35-1
5. **MIKE TYSON** Catskill, NY 47-3
6. **VITALY KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 27-0
7. **ANDREW GOLOTA** Chicago, IL 34-4
8. **OLEG MASKAEV** Staten Island, NY 19-2
9. **DAVID IZON** Pensacola, FL 25-3
10. **CHRIS BYRD** Flint, MI 30-1

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

1. **FELIX TRINIDAD** Puerto Rico 37-0 (WBA Champ)
2. **FERNANDO VARGAS** Oxnard, CA 18-0 (IBF Champ)
3. **DAVID REID** Philadelphia, PA 14-1
4. **IKE QUARTEY** Ghana 34-1-1
5. **FRANCISCO CASTILLEJO** Spain 47-4 (WBC Champ)
6. **HARRY SIMON** Namibia 19-0
7. **WINKY WRIGHT** St. Petersburg, FL 39-3
8. **KEITH MULLINGS** Brooklyn, NY 16-6-1
9. **BRONCO McKART** Monroe, MI 40-2
10. **TONY MARSHALL** Albany, NY 34-7-6

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

1. **NASEEM HAMED** England 34-0
2. **FRED NORWOOD** St. Louis, MO 36-0-1 (WBA Champ)
3. **PAUL INGLE** England 22-1 (IBF Champ)
4. **CESAR SOTO** Mexico 53-8-2
5. **LUISITO ESPINOSA** Philippines 44-8
6. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 30-2
7. **JULIO PABLO CHACON** Argentina 36-0
8. **MAŃUEL MEDINA** Mexico 56-11
9. **MBULELO BOTILE** South Africa 26-1
10. **JUAN CARLOS RAMIREZ** Mexico 20-2

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

1. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA** Mexico 49-3
2. **ERIK MORALES** Mexico 36-0 (WBC Champ)
3. **BONES ADAMS** Henderson, KY 39-3-3 (WBA Champ)
4. **LEHLO LEDWABA** South Africa 29-1-1 (IBF Champ)
5. **WAYNE McCULLOUGH** Las Vegas, NV 23-3
6. **NESTOR GARZA** Mexico 38-2
7. **ENRIQUE SANCHEZ** Mexico 26-1-1
8. **ANTONIO CERMENO** Venezuela 35-3
9. **MANNY PACQUAIO** Philippines 27-2
10. **MICHAEL BRODIE** England 28-0

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

1. **TIM AUSTIN** Cincinnati, OH 20-0-1 (IBF Champ)
2. **PAULIE AYALA** Ft. Worth, TX 30-1 (WBA Champ)
3. **JOHNNY TAPIA** Albuquerque, NM 47-1-2
4. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** Thailand 25-1 (WBC Champ)
5. **NANA KONADU** Ghana 40-4-1
6. **JORGE ELIECER JULIO** Colombia 42-2
7. **JULIO GAMBOA** Nicaragua 24-4
8. **CUAUHTEMOC GOMEZ** Mexico 47-7
9. **JOHNNY BREDAHL** Denmark 45-2
10. **ADAN VARGAS** Mexico 33-2-1

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 190 pounds

1. **JUAN CARLOS GOMEZ**
   Germany 30-0 (WBC Champ)
2. **VASSILIY JIROV**
   Kazakhstan 23-0 (IBF Champ)
3. **FABRICE TIOZZO**
   France 41-1 (WBA Champ)
4. **JOHNNY NELSON**
   England 36-12-1
5. **MARCELO DOMINGUEZ**
   Argentina 29-3-1
6. **ARTHUR WILLIAMS**
   Pensacola, FL 32-5-1
7. **JAMES TONEY**
   Las Vegas, NV 59-4-2
8. **CARL THOMPSON**
   England 25-5
9. **VIRGIL HILL**
   Bismarck, ND 45-3
10. **SAUL MONTANA**
    Mexico 33-7

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight limit: 175 pounds

1. **ROY JONES**
   Pensacola, FL 41-1 (WBC/WBA/IBF Champ)
2. **DARIUSZ MICHALCZEWSKI**
   Germany 41-0
3. **REGGIE JOHNSON**
   Houston, TX 40-6-1
4. **GRACIANO ROCCHIGIANI**
   Germany 40-4-1
5. **MICHAEL NUNN**
   Davenport, IA 54-4
6. **ERIC HARDING**
   Philadelphia, PA 18-0-1
7. **ANTONIO TARVER**
   Orlando, FL 15-0
8. **DAVID TELESCO**
   Port Chester, NY 23-3
9. **MONTELL GRIFFIN**
   Chicago, IL 38-3
10. **RICHARD HALL**
    Winter Haven, FL 24-1

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

1. **SVEN OTTKE**
   Germany 18-0 (IBF Champ)
2. **BYRON MITCHELL**
   Ozark, AL 20-0-1 (WBA Champ)
3. **JOE CALZAGHE**
   Wales 28-0
4. **MARKUS BEYER**
   Germany 18-0 (WBC Champ)
5. **CHARLES BREWER**
   Philadelphia, PA 35-6
6. **THOMAS TATE**
   Houston, TX 36-6
7. **FRANKIE LILES**
   N. Hollywood, CA 32-3
8. **RICHIE WOODHALL**
   England 25-2
9. **ROBIN REID**
   England 26-2-1
10. **GLENN CATLEY**
    England 25-3

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
   Philadelphia, PA 36-2-1 (IBF Champ)
2. **WILLIAM JOPPY**
   Washington, D.C. 29-1-1 (WBA Champ)
3. **KEITH HOLMES**
   Washington, D.C. 34-2 (WBC Champ)
4. **HASSINE CHERIFI**
   France 29-3-1
5. **ANTWUN ECHOLS**
   Davenport, IA 23-3-1
6. **ARMAND KRAJNC**
   Sweden 23-0
7. **ROBERT McCRACKEN**
   England 33-0
8. **DAVEY HILTON**
   Canada 38-1-3
9. **BERT SCHENK**
   Germany 23-0
10. **RITO RUVALCABA**
    Mexico 27-2

WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

1. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA**
   Whittier, CA 32-1 (WBC Champ)
2. **JAMES PAGE**
   Pittsburg, CA 25-3 (WBA Champ)
3. **SHANE MOSLEY**
   Pomona, CA 34-0
4. **VERNON FORREST**
   Atlanta, GA 31-0
5. **OBA CARR**
   Detroit, MI 50-3-1
6. **SHANNAN TAYLOR**
   Australia 26-0-1
7. **WILFREDO RIVERA**
   Puerto Rico 30-4-1
8. **AHMED KATEJEW**
   Russia 25-0
9. **THOMAS DAMGAARD**
   Denmark 19-0
10. **DERRELL COLEY**
    Capitol Heights, MD 34-2-2

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

1. **KOSTYA TSZYU**
   Australia 24-1-1 (WBC Champ)
2. **SHARMBA MITCHELL**
   Washington, D.C. 46-2 (WBA Champ)
3. **TERRONN MILLETT**
   St. Louis, MO 22-1-1
4. **ZAB JUDAH**
   Brooklyn, NY 22-0 (IBF Champ)
5. **RANDALL BAILEY**
   Miami, FL 20-0
6. **ANTONIO DIAZ**
   Coachella, CA 30-2
7. **MICKEY WARD**
   Lowell, MA 35-9
8. **ARTURO GATTI**
   Jersey City, NJ 31-4
9. **REGGIE GREEN**
   Clinton, MD 31-4
10. **TEDDY REID**
    Washington, D.C. 16-3-1

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

1. **STEVE JOHNSTON**
   Denver, CO 30-1 (WBC Champ)
2. **ANGEL MANFREDY**
   Gary, IN 30-4-1
3. **PAUL SPADAFORA**
   Pittsburgh, PA 29-0 (IBF Champ)
4. **CESAR BAZAN**
   Mexico 36-3-1
5. **IVAN ROBINSON**
   Philadelphia, PA 29-3
6. **GILBERT SERRANO**
   Venezuela 19-4-2 (WBA Champ)
7. **COLIN DUNNE**
   England 29-1
8. **ARTUR GRIGORIJAN**
   Uzbekistan 29-0
9. **JAMES LEIJA**
   San Antonio, TX 39-4-2
10. **VICTORIANO SOSA**
    Dominican Republic 24-2-1

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

1. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
   Grand Rapids, MI 23-0 (WBC Champ)
2. **DIEGO CORRALES**
   Sacramento, CA 31-0 (IBF Champ)
3. **JONGKWON BAEK**
   South Korea 21-0-1 (WBA Champ)
4. **ROBERTO GARCIA**
   Oxnard, CA 32-1
5. **LAKVA SIM**
   Mongolia 12-2-1
6. **YONG SOO CHOI**
   South Korea 26-3-1
7. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
   Austin, TX 30-1
8. **ACELINO FREITAS**
   Brazil 25-0
9. **GOYO VARGAS**
   Mexico 39-7-1
10. **JOHN BROWN**
    Atlantic City, NJ 20-7

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

1. **MARK JOHNSON**
   Washington, D.C. 38-1
2. **IN JOO CHO**
   South Korea 17-0 (WBC Champ)
3. **HIDEKI TODAKA**
   Japan 16-2-1 (WBA Champ)
4. **JESUS ROJAS**
   Venezuela 34-7-3
5. **GERRY PENALOSA**
   Philippines 40-3-2
6. **YOKTHAI SITHOAR**
   Thailand 19-1-1
7. **LUIS BOLANO**
   Colombia 31-0
8. **RATANACHAI VORAPIN**
   Thailand 35-4
9. **JOEL LUNA-ZARATE**
   Mexico 32-3-2
10. **ERIC MOREL**
    Madison, WI 24-0

FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

1. **SORNPICHAI SINGWANGCHA**
   Thailand 18-0 (WBA Champ)
2. **MEDGOEN TOYOTA-THAILAND**
   Thailand 20-0 (WBC Champ)
3. **IRENE PACHECO**
   Colombia 24-0 (IBF Champ)
4. **CHATCHAI DUTCHBOY GYM**
   Thailand 34-2
5. **LEO GAMEZ**
   Venezuela 32-7-1
6. **HUGO SOTO**
   Argentina 50-6-2
7. **SAEN SOR PLOENCHIT**
   Thailand 34-1
8. **JOSE BONILLA**
   Venezuela 25-5
9. **ALEJANDRO MONTIEL**
   Mexico 42-3
10. **ISIDRO GARCIA**
    Los Angeles, CA 20-1-1

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

1. **RICARDO LOPEZ**
   Mexico 48-0-1 (IBF Champ)
2. **YEOSAM CHOI**
   South Korea 21-1 (WBC Champ)
3. **PICHIT C. SIRIWAT**
   Thailand 22-1 (WBA Champ)
4. **ROSENDO ALVAREZ**
   Nicaragua 26-1-1
5. **SAMAN SORJATURONG**
   Thailand 41-3-1
6. **HAWK MAKEPULA**
   South Africa 17-0
7. **BABY JAKE MATLALA**
   South Africa 50-11-2
8. **MELCHOR COB CASTRO**
   Mexico 58-6-4
9. **WILL GRIGSBY**
   St. Paul, MN 14-2-1
10. **JOMA GAMBOA**
    Philippines 26-4-1

STRAWWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

1. **ZOLANI PETELO**
   South Africa 15-2-2 (IBF Champ)
2. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
   Mexico 22-1-1 (WBC Champ)
3. **CHANA PORPAOIN**
   Thailand 39-1-1
4. **NOEL ARAMBULET**
   Venezuela 12-1-1 (WBA Champ)
5. **WANDEE SINGWANGCHA**
   Thailand 23-4
6. **SONGKRAM PORPAOIN**
   Thailand 20-2-1
7. **ROCKY LIN**
   Philippines 26-2
8. **KERMIN GUARDIA**
   Columbia 32-2
9. **JOSE GARCIA**
   Colombia 22-5-1
10. **OSWALDO GUERRERO**
    Mexico 27-5

RYAN OUT LOUD

By Jeff Ryan

BOXING'S BEST FRIEND

There's a reason why my cable operator, which raises its rates the way Iowa raises corn, is able to suck an extra $12.95 out of me every month for HBO. It's not because there's a burning desire in my household to see saggy, fortysomething nudists communing in the mountains on *Real Sex*. Or to listen to weirdoes pour out the gory details of their lives on *Taxicab Confessions*. It's not because of Dennis Miller, Chris Rock, or HBO's splendid Wimbledon coverage—heck, HBO stopped covering Wimbledon last year. *The Sopranos*? Fuggedaboutit. I've never even seen the freakin' show.

The one reason HBO is able to count me among its 26 million subscribers is its boxing coverage, plain and simple. When it comes to airing fights, nobody does it better. In fact, nobody even comes close. Showtime gives it a good try, and ESPN2 provides a necessary outlet for the less-important bouts. But let's face it, HBO pretty much *is* televised boxing these days.

The cable giant has long been a Coast Guard cutter navigating through rough seas on a mission to rescue a sinking sport. When the heavyweight title was split three ways in the late-'80s, HBO spent mega-millions on a unification series. When ABC, NBC, and CBS turned off to the fight game, and there was no longer a stage for those network-level bouts—fights too insignificant for HBO's *World Championship Boxing* but too costly for ESPN or USA—HBO *Boxing After Dark* was created. Now, HBO has come up with the monthly series, *KO Nation*, an attempt to return boxing to its traditional Saturday afternoon time slot and attract younger fans in the process.

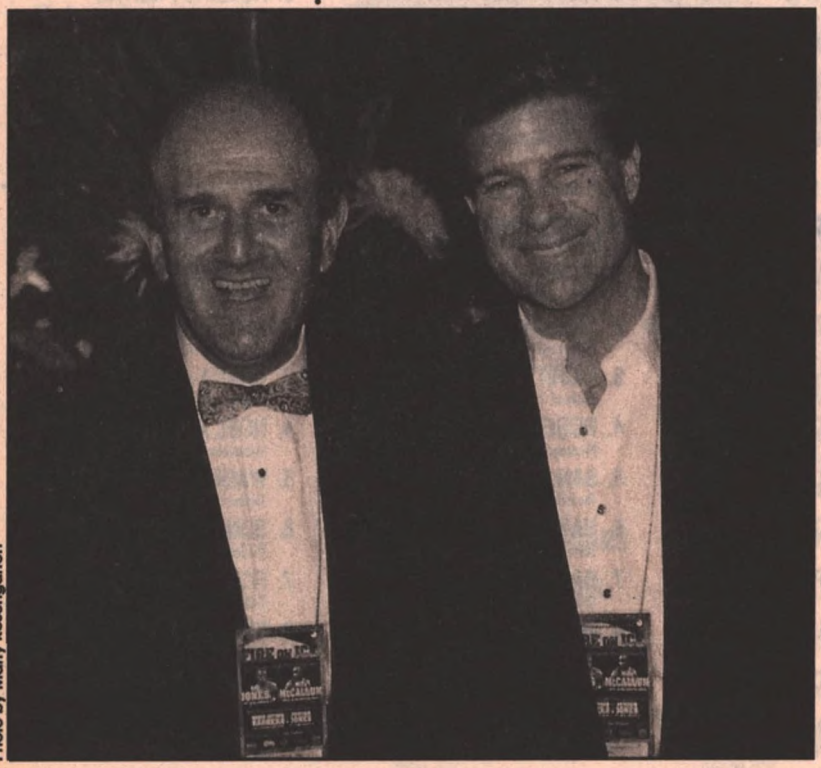


Photo by Marty Rosengarten

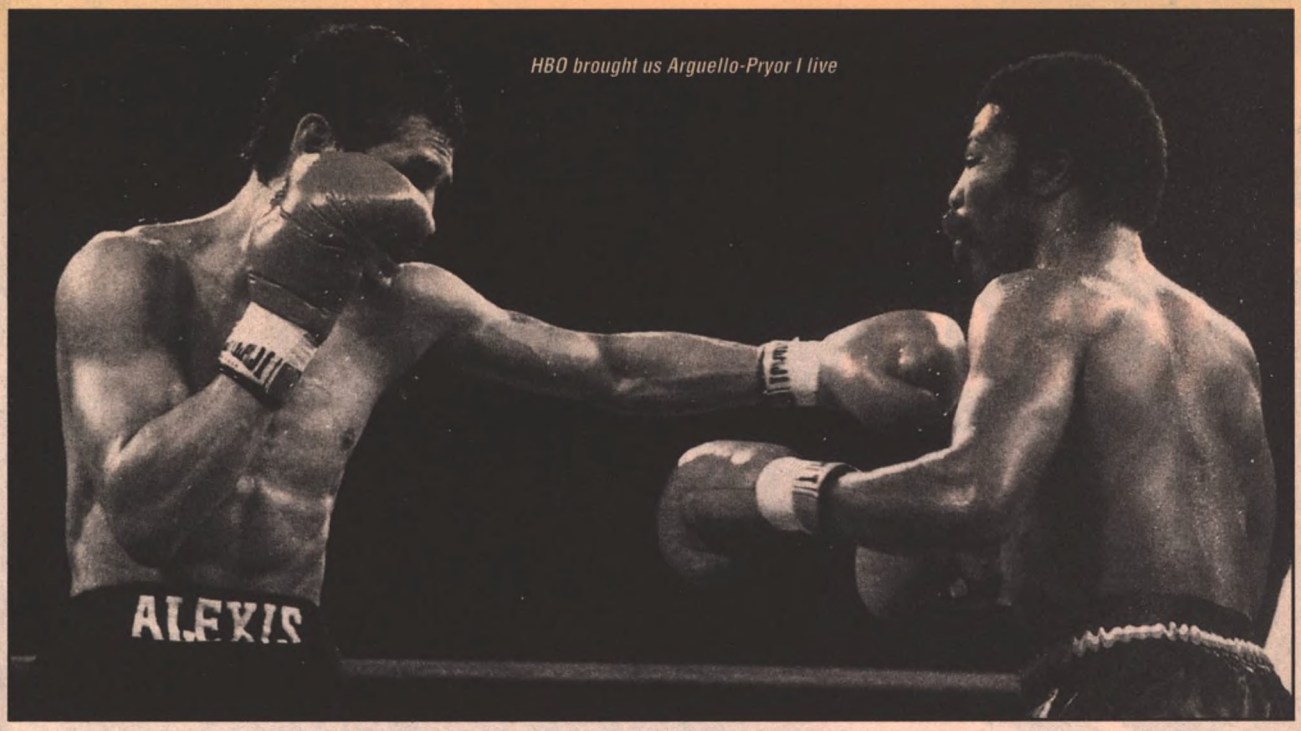
Lederman and Lamps are two of the reasons Ryan subscribes to HBO

"If you look at the TV audience for boxing, and not just on HBO, men over the age of 50 make up 61 percent of the viewers," said Seth Abraham, president and CEO of HBO Sports' parent company, Time Warner Sports. "Men ages 18 to 24 account for only three percent of the audience, and to find viewers under 18, you'd need a high-powered microscope. That's a death sentence for the sport. We believe we have a responsibility to develop the next generation of fight fans."

Listen to Abraham talk, and it's apparent that HBO actually does think of itself as boxing's savior. Which raises an interesting point. Isn't it HBO's job to *cover* the sport, rather than try to mold its direction? It certainly should be. But in a fight industry in which there are no real rules or protocol anymore, and the end always justifies the means, you don't hear anyone complaining.

"We always cover the fights on TV as true journalists," Abraham told me. "We're not hucksters."

What HBO has done through the years is something the late Howard Cosell always did



HBO brought us Arguello-Pryor I live

so well: create a sense of drama and importance simply by showing up to cover the event. With few exceptions, if HBO is airing a fight, the bout deserves attention. And if a fighter signs a long-term contract with HBO, he has officially reached superstar status. Think of some of the most memorable boxing nights of the past 20 years: Aaron Pryor-Alexis Arguello I. Julio Cesar Chavez-Meldrick Taylor I. Buster Douglas-Mike Tyson. George Foreman-Michael Moorer. Sugar Ray Leonard's comeback against Kevin Howard. The Riddick Bowe-Andrew Golota riot. Oliver McCall's breakdown. All were seen live on HBO.

It's not just the matchups or marquee names that make HBO boxing a must-see for me. It's the little things, too. Like the overhead cameras, the translators in the corners, and replays of knockdowns or headbutts shown from four different angles. It's Jim Lampley's Cosellian vocabulary and the eloquent postfight summations of Larry Merchant, one of the few sports broadcasters left who treats his job as a craft and paints pictures with his analysis.

It's the prefight profiles approached from a unique perspective and the postfight interviews that allow more than the 60 seconds the commercial networks budgeted for fights that went the distance. It's the graphics, "unofficial official" Harold Lederman's scorecards second-guessing bad verdicts, and the blimp shots of a neon-bathed Las Vegas that kick off many of the telecasts. It's also the chance to see a replay of those fights that played on TVKO pay-per-view a week or two earlier.

Of course, there are some things about HBO's fight coverage that make me insane. Giving George Foreman an analyst's job has to rate as the stupidest broadcasting hire since WJM made Ted Baxter an anchorman. PunchStat is more often distracting than it is useful. At times, Lampley seems to predetermine that a fight is going to be great, then overreacts to the action. (Lamps is also such an obvious Arturo Gatti fan, you expect him to show up at ringside one night in a "Thunder" Gatti T-shirt instead of a tux.) And enough already with the worship of house fighter/analyst Roy Jones. HBO's wheeling out the birthday cake for him after he beat David Telesco was a bit too much.

The aforementioned stuff always gets on my nerves until this question pops into my head: Where would the boxing public be without HBO? Like a Foreman-Larry Holmes fight, more ruling bodies, or Butterbean in the sauna, it's not something you ever want to try to envision. With no HBO, how would we ever get to see a Prince Hamed? Who would air Johnny Tapia-Danny Romero live or Oscar De La Hoya-Felix Trinidad on tape? How familiar would we be with David Reid, Fernando Vargas, and Floyd Mayweather?

February's De La Hoya-Derrell Coley showdown was HBO's 370th bout since it began airing boxing in 1973. At a time when everybody from the commercial networks to the general interest sports magazines is avoiding the Sweet Science as though it has a communicable disease, HBO is finding ways to broadcast even more fights.

"The company made a commitment to the sport, and it has become our franchise," explained Abraham. "When I came to HBO in 1978, we were covering gymnastics, figure skating, pro and amateur boxing, NCAA basketball. There was no identity for our sports programming, just volume. We didn't have the money to get the NFL or the NBA, so we came to boxing by process of elimination. And boxing is the perfect TV sport, a square ring on a rectangle screen.

"We got lucky when we signed Marvin Hagler. He was our first superstar and he went on to fight on HBO 18 times. From 1978 through 2000, there's never been an elite fighter who hasn't appeared on HBO in one way or another. Because we have a sports property that's very special, we've made our telecasts very special. They're like Broadway theater."

And now the curtain has gone up on *KO Nation*, the latest production. Well, give my regards to Broadway. Remember me to Harold Lederman. ■

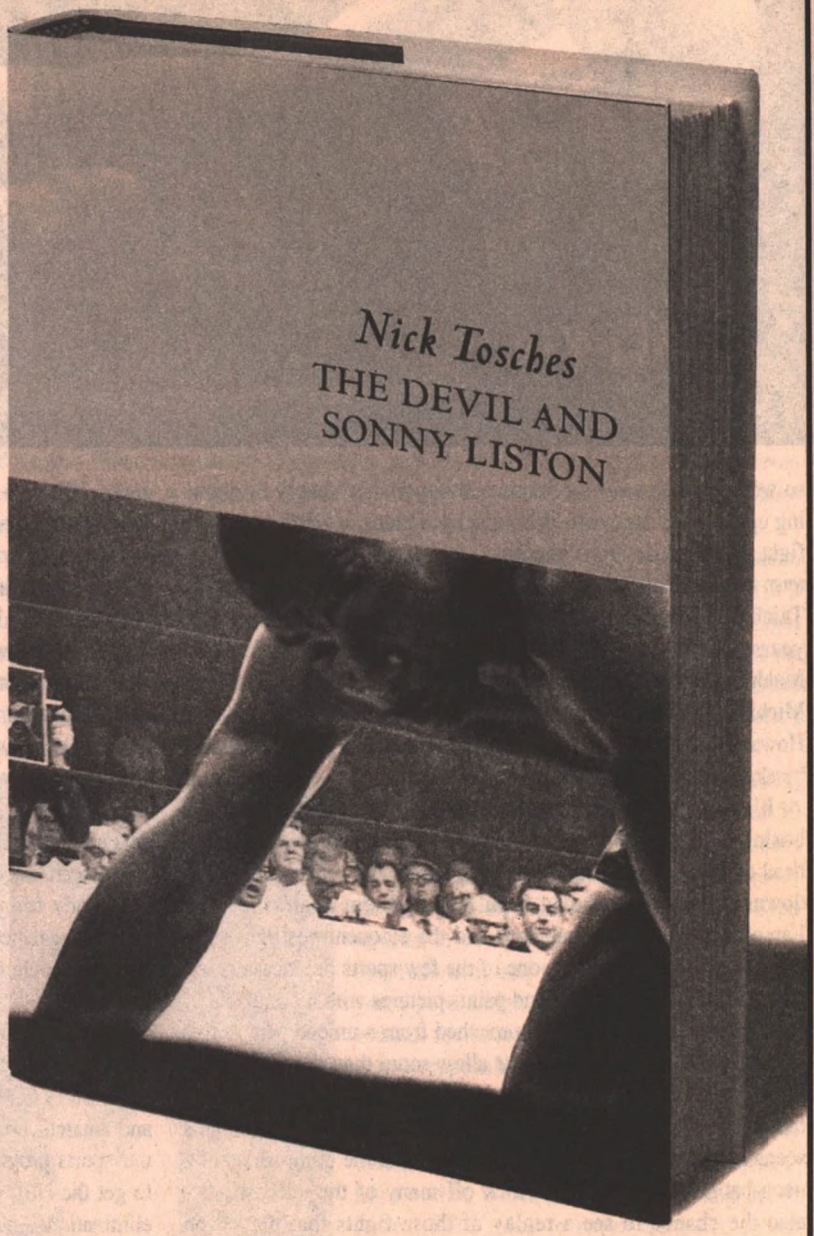
"I DARE SAY IT'LL BE THE BEST THING YOU EVER READ ABOUT A FIGHTER."

—Mark Kriegel, *Daily News*

He was born **poor.**
He learned to fight
in **prison.**

There were rumors of
thrown fights, links
with **organized crime,**
and **drug abuse.**

And yet he remains
a boxing legend.



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"Nick Tosches writes like Sonny Liston hit."
—Chuck Wepner, boxer who fought both Sonny Liston and Muhammad Ali

THE DEVIL AND SONNY LISTON
by Nick Tosches

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WHY SETTLE FOR OSCAR? TRINIDAD Has ROY JONES In His Sights!

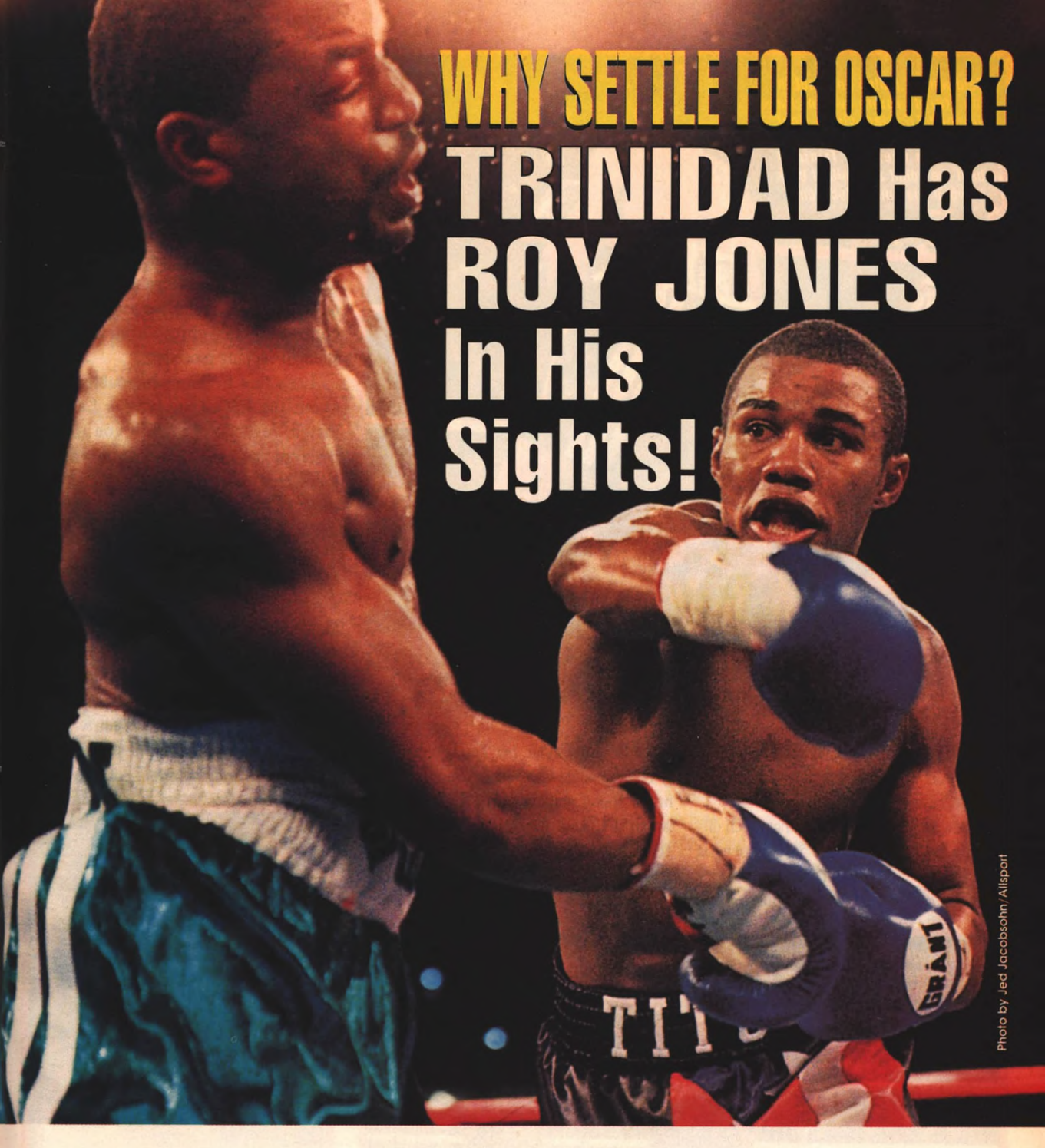


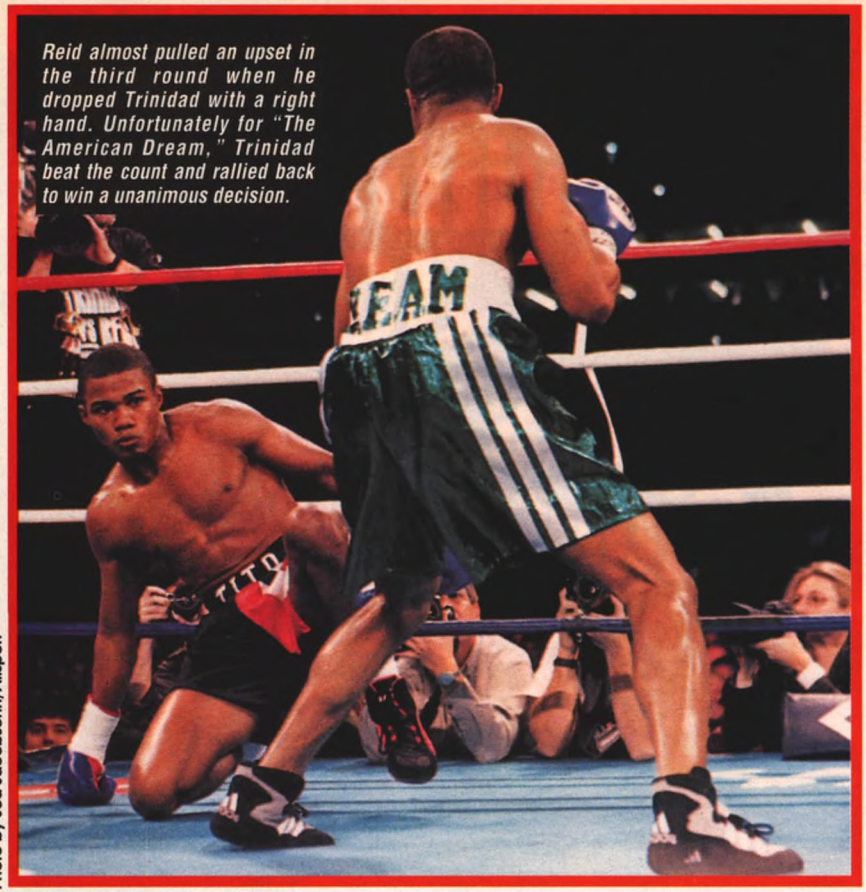
Photo by Jed Jacobsohn/Allsport

By Nigel Collins

When Felix Trinidad looks into the future, he sees Roy Jones off in the distance, a tantalizing target, shimmering like a mirage on the horizon. But thanks to his dominating decision over David Reid to win the WBA super welterweight title, a Trinidad-Jones fight has inched a tiny bit closer to becoming a reality. Say what you will about the pride of Puerto Rico's chances of beating the undisputed light heavyweight champion, but since turning pro in March 1990, "Tito" has accomplished everything he set out to do and earned the right to be taken seriously. Now he says he wants to "take it to the limit," which in Trinidad's mind means taking it to none other than Mr. Pound-For-Pound.

Trinidad has been hinting he'd like to fight Jones for some time now, but it seemed farfetched when he was the welterweight champion and Jones was the 175-pound champ. And besides, most observers felt that Tito was lucky to get the decision in his 147-pound showdown with Oscar De La Hoya; how's he supposed to beat a 175-pound speedster of Jones' brilliance?

But that was before Trinidad put a hurt on Reid to take the 154-pound title. Having accomplished that step up in weight in such impressive fashion, it would be foolish to dismiss his long-range goals out of hand. Admittedly, a fight with Jones is a longshot, but the more you think

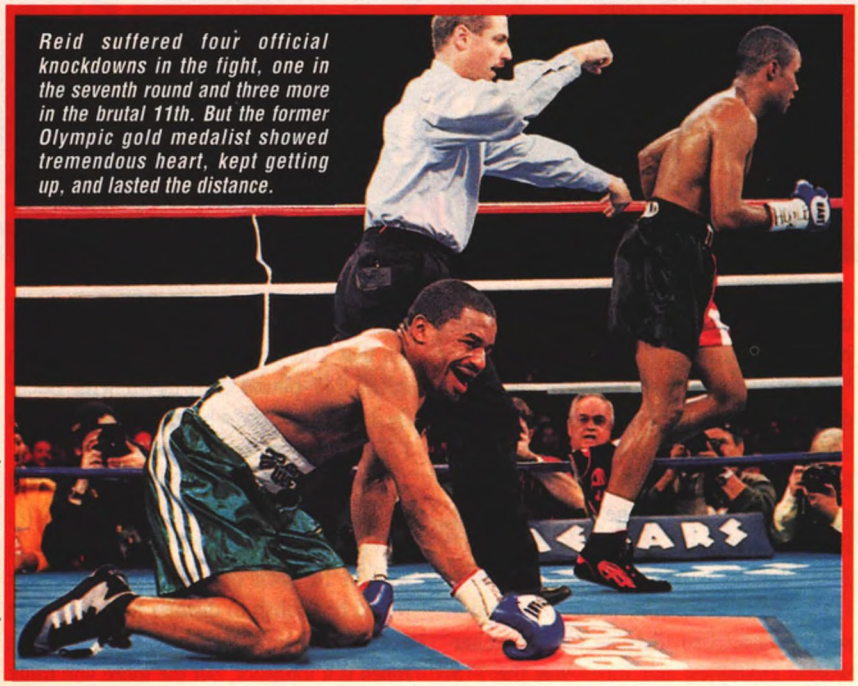


Reid almost pulled an upset in the third round when he dropped Trinidad with a right hand. Unfortunately for "The American Dream," Trinidad beat the count and rallied back to win a unanimous decision.

Photo by Jed Jacobsohn/Allsport

about it, the more you realize the odds aren't nearly as stacked against Trinidad as it might have originally seemed.

Sizewise, there's really not that much difference between them. At 5'11", Jones is only an inch taller than Trinidad, and they have identical 74-inch reaches. Sure, Jones is much more muscular, but Tito could certainly bulk up somewhat without sacrificing too much speed and mobility. Officially, he weighed 153 for the Reid fight, but he was 164 pounds by the time he entered the outdoor ring at Caesars Palace, and there still didn't appear to be a gram of fat on his body.



Reid suffered four official knockdowns in the fight, one in the seventh round and three more in the brutal 11th. But the former Olympic gold medalist showed tremendous heart, kept getting up, and lasted the distance.

Photo by Donald Miralle/Allsport

It's no secret that Trinidad, who reportedly walks around at approximately 170 pounds, had been torturing himself for several years to make 147 and that he only stayed in the welterweight division as long as he did in order to get the De La Hoya fight and the career-high purse that went with it. Moreover, the main reason Felix Sr. declined to accept an immediate rematch with De La Hoya was that he did not want to jeopardize his son's future by continuing to subject him to such a strength-sapping procedure.

Let's face it, the most troubling thing about the first Trinidad-De La Hoya match, regardless of who you thought deserved the decision, was that it was such a crushing disappointment. Sure, a large part of that was caused by De La Hoya's negative tactics down the stretch, but Trinidad was no rampaging destroyer either. He seemed strangely lethargic in his attempt to track down and corner "The Golden Boy," and even in the late rounds, when he started to get to De La Hoya, his punches lacked some of the old snap.

In light of the renewed vigor Tito displayed in the Reid fight, it's fairly safe to assume that his move up to junior middle was not only long overdue, but also highly

Photo by Frank Vitucci

A superfight between Trinidad and light heavyweight champion Roy Jones is no longer a farfetched fantasy thanks to "Tito's" big win over Reid for a piece of the 154-pound title.

beneficial. Against Reid, there was more spring in his legs, more pop in his punches, more pizzazz all around, which was very good for him, but a nightmare for "The American Dream."

Physical dimensions are not the only factors involved in making a Trinidad-Jones bout deserving of serious consideration. With De La Hoya insisting he'll continue to fight as a welterweight throughout 2000, and his promoter, Bob Arum, claiming that his prize meal ticket couldn't possibly squeeze a rematch with Trinidad into his busy schedule until 2002, the new WBA 154-pound king may have to look elsewhere for a payday approaching the estimated $12-million he earned last September in the so-called "Fight Of The Millennium."

Trinidad made a reported $3.5-million for pummeling Reid, and while that's a handsome payday, it's a big cut from the De La Hoya fight. If Tito is going to maximize his profits without De La Hoya's help, "taking it to the limit" pretty much has to lead to a fight with the man currently heading THE RING's pound-for-pound ratings. (If you can't guess who number two is, turn to page 13.)

There's also another financial factor to be taken into consideration. According to early pay-per-view figures, SET only sold between 150,000 and 200,000 homes for the Trinidad-Reid fight, compared to 1.3 million homes for Trinidad-De La Hoya.

(Continued on page 73)

TITO TAKES LESS, GIVES MORE

A lot of people thought Felix Trinidad Sr. made a huge mistake when he refused to allow his son, the reigning WBC/IBF welterweight champion, to fight a rematch with Oscar De La Hoya. Instead, Team Trinidad opted to challenge 154-pound champion David Reid for a fraction of the money a return with De La Hoya would have generated. But the calculated risk paid off when Trinidad rallied back from a third-round knockdown to win a 12-round unanimous decision and the WBA super welterweight belt.

Following a feel-'em-out opener and an inconsequential second, Reid, 153, began to tee off with his vaunted right hand in the third round. An overhand right caught Trinidad high on the head and drove him across the ring, eliciting a roar from the capacity crowd of 10,100 at Caesars Palace. Reid calmly stepped in, poked out a range-finding jab, and then lashed out with a straight right between Trinidad's raised gloves. The punch caught "Tito" flush on the chin and sent him down.

Later, Trinidad would admit he was hurt by the punch, but he gave no sign of it at the time, and jumped right back up. He aided his cause with a low blow later in the round, which prompted referee Mitch Halpern to give Reid a brief rest and issue a warning to Trinidad.

Although "The American Dream" won the fourth on all three official cards, he made the mistake of not forcing the issue enough.

Felix Senior (left) knew what he was doing when he matched his son with Reid

Photo by Jed Jacobsohn/Allsport

Reid seemed to be looking for the perfect spot to drop the bomb again, but in the meantime, Trinidad was working his way back into the fight, paving the way to a dramatic comeback with crippling left hooks to the body.

Trinidad was enjoying a good round in the sixth when another shot strayed below the belt, forcing Halpern to subtract one point from the challenger's total. With the deduction, Reid was leading 57-55 on all three cards at the halfway point, but after getting clobbered with a murderous left hook to the chin in the seventh, he was never again in the fight with a chance to win. The blow sent the defending champ staggering backward across the ring and then down in a heap. It was Trinidad's home-run punch, the sort that normally ends a fight then and there, but Reid struggled to his feet, and the bell sounded before another punch could land.

The eighth was another big round for Trinidad. He pelted Reid with powershots from both sides and opened a cut above his right eye. Things got worse for Reid in the ninth when he was penalized for a low blow, which gave Trinidad another two-point round. But after faring moderately better in the 10th, the Philadelphian was hammered unmercifully in the 11th, a round in which he was knocked down three times.

"I was going to stop it a couple of times," said Al Mitchell, Reid's longtime mentor and trainer. "But we had a prearranged signal, where David would get to one knee and look over at me if he was okay. And he did that each time he went down, so I let him go on."

It was a minor miracle that Reid, 14-1 (7), was still around to hear the final bell. He'd shown a big right hand, and an even bigger heart, but Trinidad's enormous advantage in experience was simply too much for him to overcome.

"He hit me with some good shots," said Reid, who earned a career-high $1.6-million. "Tito was the better man tonight, but I have to be a gentleman, take this loss, and come right back."

"I never got discouraged after the knockdown, and when the point was taken away," said Trinidad, 37-0 (30), "it only made me focus more on my game plan."

Television: SET

Promoters: Don King Productions, in association with America Presents & Caesars Palace

(3-3-00)

—NC

HOMING IN ON ZAB JUDAH

Superstardom Is A Family Affair

Photo by Frank Vitucci

By Joe Santoliquito

From the black tiger statues jutting out from behind the sofa to a pair of ornery pythons curled up in a fish tank, it feels more like a karate dojo than the home of a world champion boxer. Trophies sprout from almost every piece of furniture like corn stalks in a field. In the dining room is a shrine to all of the family's boxing and kickboxing exploits, complete with a picture of a skinny 10-year-old whose body had not yet grown into his big puppy feet, posing like a young Muhammad Ali, along with his brothers and his ever-present father.

That's the way Yoel Judah wanted it for his seven sons. The karate motif created an ambience that conveyed discipline and power. It's the environment Zab Judah grew up in. It's home where Zab's actions slow down, where words spill out more fluidly than the rapid-fire manner in which he speaks in public. It's also the root of all of Judah's success, coupled with "The Voice," the disciplinary persona of his father. Before Judah won the vacant IBF junior welterweight title with a fourth-round knockout of Jan Bergman in Uncasville, Connecticut, on February 12, The Voice provided the foundation. Now it serves more of a supporting role, but when there is something that needs to be corrected or emphasized, The Voice is there for guidance.

All the Judah boys are familiar with it. When Yoel wants to get a point across to his sons, his voice will get deeper and hit a certain tone that reaches their nerve centers. It's the link in an unshakable bond between father and son that has elevated Zab to his status as one of today's premier young boxers. There is no wedge that can come between them, and when it's time for Judah to fight, there's his omnipresent father right there behind him, yelling instructions, telling him what to do.

The Voice made a guest appearance briefly at the Bergman fight, after Judah suffered a flash knockdown in the second. Zab was smiling, but Yoel was seething. He knew his son's tendencies; he knew Zab was making the fight harder than it should have been. And he let his gifted son know it before he went out for the third round of the most important fight of his life.

"At home, all my boys are like my homeboys. We talk about everything, and when I say everything, I mean *everything*," Yoel said. "But they know when I get serious. There isn't a lack of respect from them, because I get that Voice. My boys know it. My voice will get deeper, and when I get that tone, they know something is up. Zab has to learn to think for himself. Zab was so confident in the Bergman fight, and a little too cocky. I was real heated after that second round. Believe me when I say I got his attention real fast. After the second round, he got real serious real fast."

Zab and his father are almost inseparable. Go to any major fight in the New York City area, and you'll usually find them seated together at ringside. It's the way it's always been. Yoel, who looks much younger than his age (he won't say for sure, but he's in his

(Continued on page 73)

Photo by Marty Rosengarten

After scoring two knockdowns in the first round, Judah used his superior quickness and power to finish off Jan Bergman in the fourth.

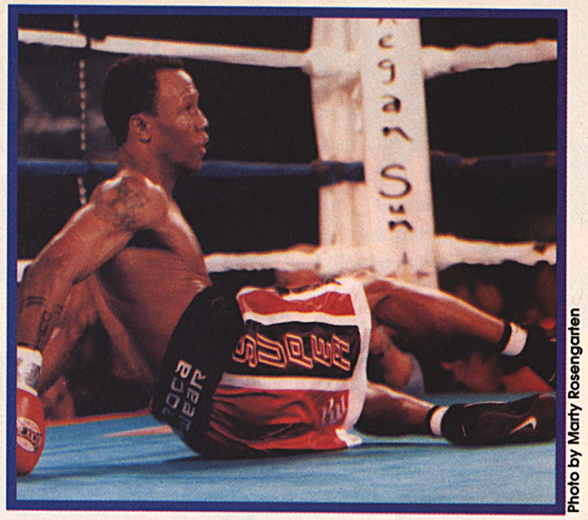


Photo by Marty Rosengarten

Judah finds himself on the canvas after some showboating in the second round. If there is one thing that annoys Yoel Judah about his talented son, it's his penchant to play in the ring.

Photo by Marty Rosengarten

Meeting WBC super lightweight champ Kostya Tszyu would be Judah's ultimate test at 140 pounds. The Judahs' plans involve getting a few title defenses in before focusing on the powerful Tszyu.

Four-For-Four, With Four Kayos

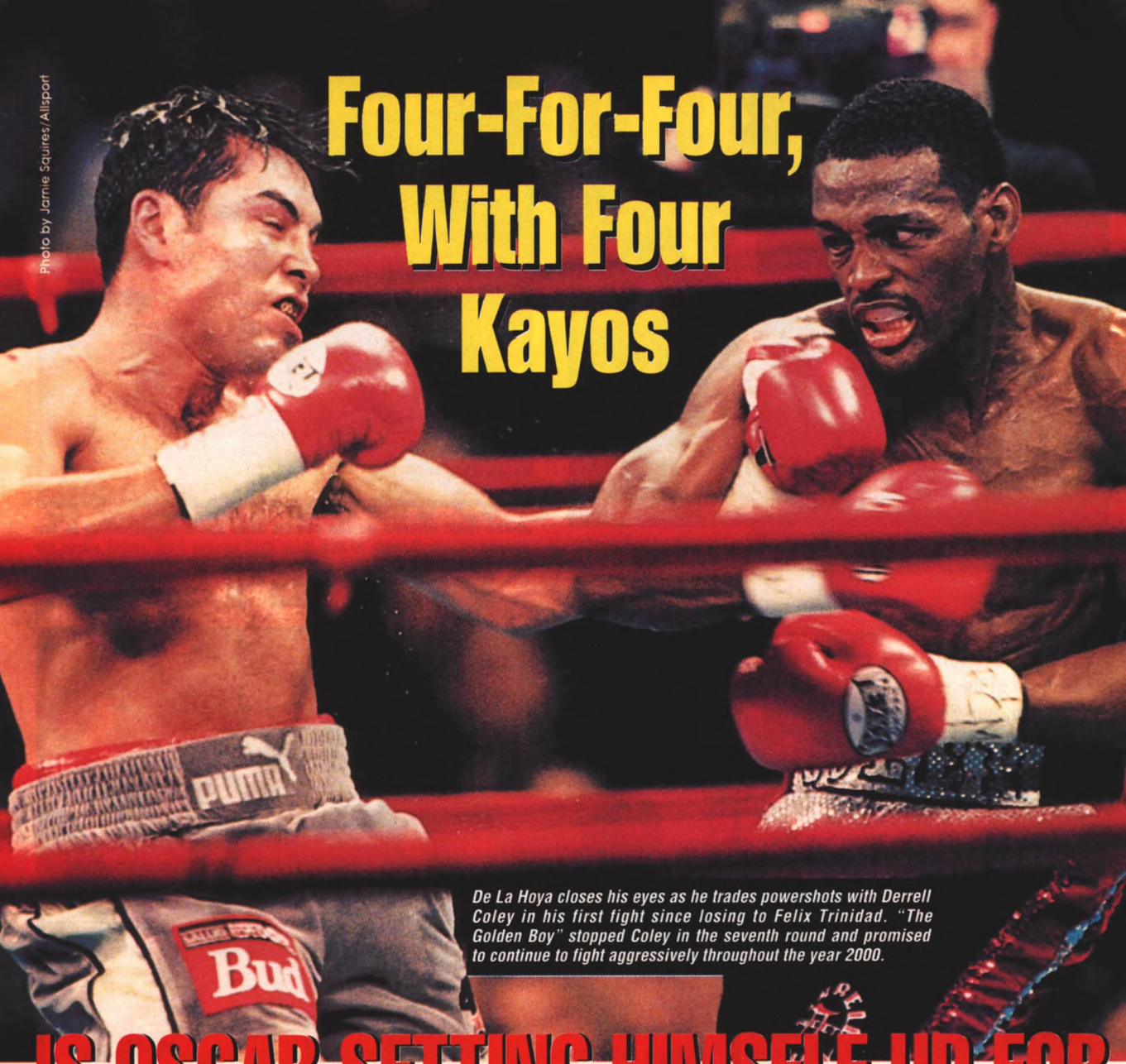


Photo by Jamie Squires/Allsport

De La Hoya closes his eyes as he trades powershots with Derrell Coley in his first fight since losing to Felix Trinidad. "The Golden Boy" stopped Coley in the seventh round and promised to continue to fight aggressively throughout the year 2000.

IS OSCAR SETTING HIMSELF UP FOR ANOTHER BROKEN PROMISE?

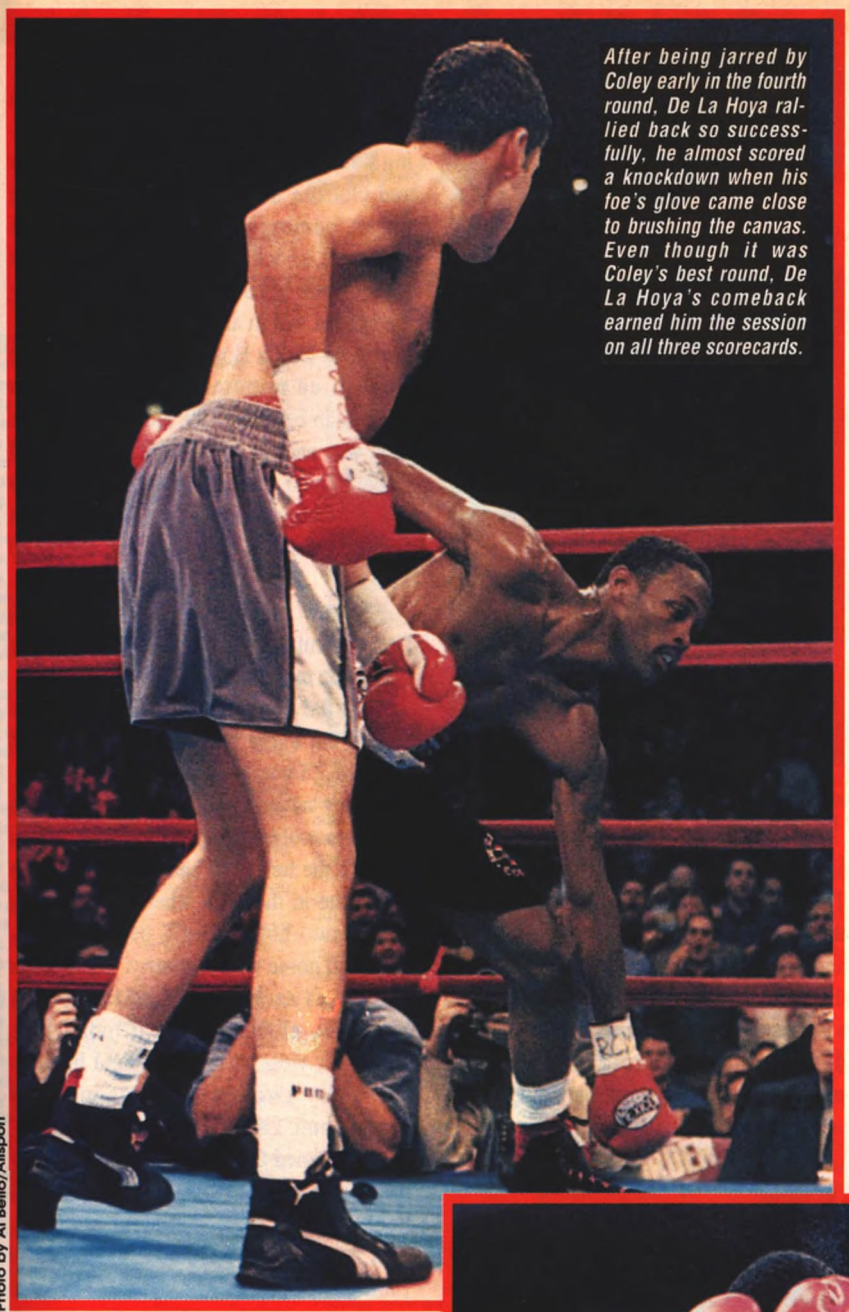
By Nigel Collins

One down, and three to go.

By now, you've probably heard Oscar De La Hoya's mantra for the year 2000: *four fights, four knockouts*. He started chanting it before his seventh-round knockout of Derrell Coley, and was still repeating it afterward, making it the central theme of his latest reinvention of himself. This time around, he's cast himself as the sadder-but-wiser warrior, and swears he learned his lesson last September when he threw away victory by turning his showdown with Felix Trinidad into a track meet. This year, De La Hoya says he's going for the kayo every time out. *Four fights, four knockouts*. The only thing "The Golden Boy" didn't say was exactly who it was that was going to get knocked out—him or his opponents!

No doubt, De La Hoya felt it was understood that he'd be the one left standing at the end of each of his fights. That's the way it is when you've been a superstar since the amateurs. His bold prediction went hand-in-hand with his promise to forget the safety-first approach that cost him his undefeated record against Trinidad. But you don't have to be Eddie Futch to know that in order to be more aggressive, De La Hoya will have to place himself in harm's way, which can, of course, lead to all sorts of complications.

If the rest of the year's proposed schedule pitted De La Hoya against foes of



After being jarred by Coley early in the fourth round, De La Hoya rallied back so successfully, he almost scored a knockdown when his foe's glove came close to brushing the canvas. Even though it was Coley's best round, De La Hoya's comeback earned him the session on all three scorecards.

Photo by Al Bello/Allsport

Jesse James Leija, Genaro Hernandez, Julio Cesar Chavez—De La Hoya turned assassin. The same goes for relatively light hitters Wilfredo Rivera, Patrick Charpentier, David Kamau, and Oba Carr. But with "Tito" Trinidad lobbing hand grenades at him, "Oscar The Boxer" emerged, turning what was billed as "The Fight Of The Millennium" into a tedious tap dance.

What's so damned confounding about De La Hoya is that, at times, he's everything anybody could possibly want him to be. He showed the right stuff in the 12th round of the Ike Quartey fight, letting it all hang out against an opponent who'd already had him down, an opponent he *knew* could hurt him. Critics also forget that he was coming up in weight when he destroyed Rafael Ruelas to win the IBF lightweight title in May '95. So for discussion's sake, let's give De La Hoya the benefit of the doubt, take his four-fights-four-knockouts vow at face value, and see what, if anything, the Coley skirmish tells us about his chance of fulfilling his forecast.

Despite the fact that the bout was held at Madison Square Garden in front of an announced crowd of 13,814 and an HBO audience of millions, the Coley fight was nothing more than a high-priced tuneup. Forget the inconsequential IBO welterweight belt that was on the line. This was a get-well fight for De La Hoya, and Coley was the perfect prescription to cure what ailed him: good but not great, respected Coley's caliber, four-for-four inside the distance wouldn't be much of a reach. But with former IBF lightweight champ Sugar Shane Mosley up next and maybe a rematch with Trinidad later in the year, things are bound to get much tougher as 2000 progresses. Besides, haven't we heard all this tough talk before, only to watch De La Hoya turn into a cutie once the bell rang?

Looking back over his career, a cynic would say that the intensity of De La Hoya's aggression can often be traced directly to his opponent's inability to inflict serious damage in return. Against guys either too small, too old, or both—

Photo by Al Bello/Allsport

When Coley lowered his guard to protect himself from De La Hoya's fierce body attack, The Golden Boy came upstairs with his potent left hook. Despite an impressive record, Coley didn't have the weapons to stave off De La Hoya's hard-charging assault.

Photo by Al Bello/Allsport

End of the line: Coley finally caved to De La Hoya's emphatic body attack, and following a final left hook to the stomach, he was counted out by referee Wayne Kelly.

but not feared, and most importantly in the minds of Team De La Hoya, an average puncher at best.

Coley, who spent most of the week prior to the fight running his mouth, scoffed at De La Hoya's promise to "duke it out."

"I can't believe anything that man says," sneered Coley. "I haven't heard the word 'duke' for so long, I had to laugh. I don't know if I can *duke* with him."

As it turned out, he couldn't, and Coley's mirth ended midway into round one when De La Hoya dug the first left hook into his ribs. It was the beginning of a committed body attack, a punishing assault that De La Hoya sustained throughout the fight, and also the first sign that on this night, at least, we'd see the hardcore version of The Golden Boy.

De La Hoya continued to grind down his back-pedaling adversary in the second and most of the third, but a brief, inconsequential flurry by Coley near the end of the round appeared to boost the underdog's morale. He pumped his fist in the air on his way back to his corner and came out for the fourth with a determined look in his eyes.

It wasn't long before Coley's right hand flashed between De La Hoya's guard and smacked directly into his forehead. The jarring blow definitely caught the three-division former champ by surprise and pulled him up short. Coley instantly threw his offense into high gear, unloading a series of combinations at his suddenly defensive-minded rival. A few more punches found the target, but De La Hoya ducked, blocked, or rolled with the majority of the barrage.

Photo by Frank Vitucci

One advantage that Shane Mosley will have when he fights De La Hoya in June is consistency. His father, Jack Mosley (left), has trained him throughout his career, teaching Sugar Shane a highly successful style he calls "power-boxing."

Then, as Coley's bombardment began to subside, De La Hoya launched a blistering counterattack. He chased after Coley and clocked him with several scorching hooks, coming within an inch or so of scoring a knockdown when Coley's left glove came perilously close to touching the canvas. All in all, it was the most exciting round De La Hoya has fought since the final three minutes of his fight with Quartey in February '99, and his comeback rally was enough to win the session on all three official scorecards. How buzzed he was by Coley's initial right hand depends on whose version of events you choose to believe.

"I know I had Oscar hurt," said Coley, "but I burnt myself out. I just didn't have enough to take him out."

"He did come out with a flurry in the fourth, but I was never hurt," asserted De La Hoya. "I was in control 100 percent."

Coley never threatened again, and De La Hoya wobbled him in the fifth with a hook to the head. He had Coley in trouble again late in the sixth when four booming lefts—two hooks and a pair of jabs—slammed home with authority. There was a fairly even exchange to start the seventh, but Coley emerged from it looking the worse for wear, the area around his right eye badly swollen, his legs unsteady beneath him. Late in the round, a right further weakened Coley's resolve, and shortly afterward, De La Hoya drove a final left hook into the pit of his stomach. Coley bent at the waist, stumbled sideways, and then crumbled to his knees, where he remained until referee Wayne Kelly counted him out at the three-minute mark.

"It knocked the wind out of me," said Coley, 34-2-2 (24), of the fight-ending bodyblow. "I thought if I took a knee, I could recover, but I couldn't. Oscar overpowered me."

Considering Coley's modest punch and his lack of experience against top-notch opposition ("I've never been to this level before, and not being on his level cost me the fight"), the fact that he was overpowered came as no surprise. That De La Hoya, 32-1 (26), tackled the task of disposing of him in such a gritty, no-nonsense manner has to be encouraging to his sup-

(Continued on page 75)

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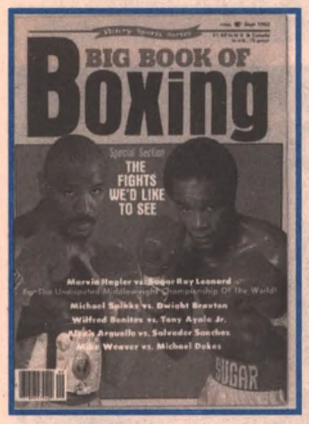

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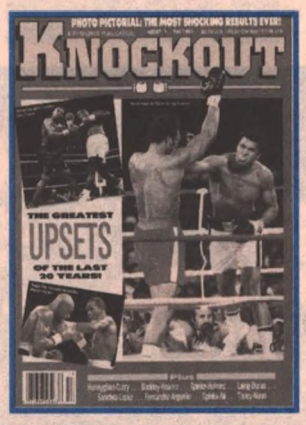

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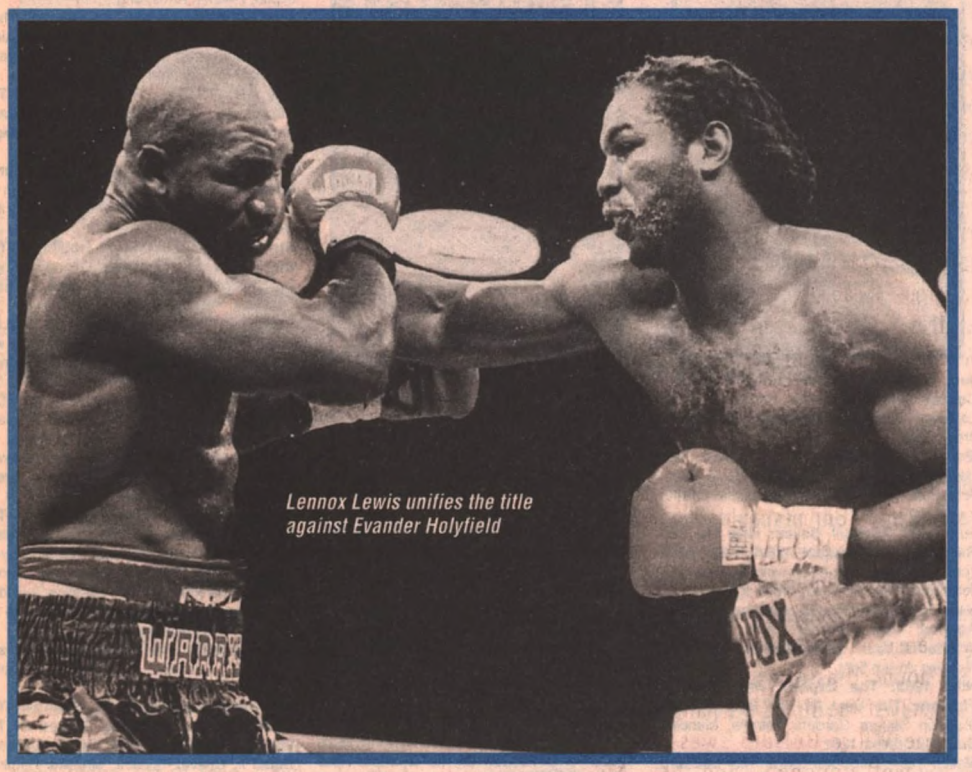
THE STATE OF THE GAME



Lennox Lewis unifies the title against Evander Holyfield

By Eric Raskin

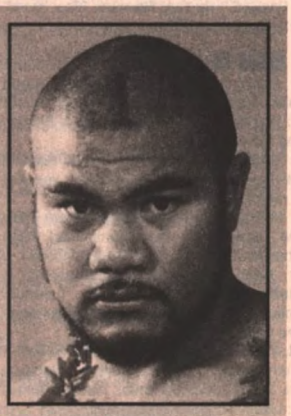
The boxing optimist says the fight game is prospering right now. Great fights are being made left and right. If you have enough cable channels, you can watch live fights at least two or three times every week. The leaders of the IBF have been indicted, and that's the first major step toward cleaning up the alphabet bodies that have been the sport's worst enemy for years. Titles are getting unified with ever-increasing regularity. And the last 12 months have seen the crownings of such exciting, young champions as Zab Judah, Paul Spadafora, and Diego Corrales.

But the boxing pessimist has plenty of strong counter-arguments. Many of the great fights that have been made recently have turned out to be dogs. There's no boxing on free TV, and there's virtually no coverage of the sport in the mainstream media. The IBF indictments send a message to the average sports fan that corruption runs rampant in boxing. It's often not who deserved to win the fight, but rather whose promoter was running the show. And for God's sake, Laila Ali vs. Jacqui Frazier?! Could there be anything more insulting to real fighters everywhere than the purses and attention these two are getting?

Then there's the boxing realist, who just knows that you have to take the bad with the good. And the truth is, for all of the game's ills, there's more to be excited about now than there has been in years. Oscar De La Hoya vs. Shane Mosley. Kostya Tszyu vs. Arturo Gatti. Naseem Hamed vs. Erik Morales. Mike Tyson fighting for the heavyweight crown again. These could all become reality before the end of 2000 and should help the purists overlook the fact that Ali vs. Frazier doesn't quite mean what it used to.

HEAVYWEIGHTS

Let's all say it together: Boxing has an undisputed heavyweight champion. For that reason alone, it can be argued that the Sweet Science's glamour division is healthier than it's been at any point since Mike Tyson was tripped up by Buster Douglas in 1990. And regardless of whether it's Lennox Lewis or Michael Grant that holds the unified title when you read this, either way, it signifies the dawning of a new era.



David Tua

Mike Tyson

If it's Lewis, then that means the end of America's vice-grip on the heavyweight belt. The Brit will have beaten the United States' best old-guard heavy (Evander Holyfield) and best new-wave big man (Grant) in succession, and most of the other top hopefuls—David Tua, Vitaly and Wladimir Klitschko, Ike Ibeabuchi, and Oleg Maskaev—are not Americans. If Grant turns out to have upset the odds and defeated Lewis at Madison Square Garden, then that means the young heavyweights have finally arrived, and the thirtysomethings, though still big draws, will probably fade from the title picture for good.

But the heavyweight division is not only thriving because the three belts have finally become one again; it also has something to do with the fact that there's a fairly deep group of credible contenders vying for those belts. Tua, despite sitting on his IBF rating, is a vicious puncher who deserves his shot. The Klitschkos, though relatively untested, are huge and dangerous. Ibeabuchi, regardless of all his outside-the-ring problems, is a tremendous talent. And guys like Maskaev, David Izon, Derrick Jefferson, Chris Byrd, Hasim Rahman, Kirk Johnson, Lawrence Clay-Bey, and Frans Botha shouldn't be counted out yet.

Think About It: Remember when Tyson got his boxing license back and Botha was announced as his first opponent? At the time, it seemed "The White Buffalo" was a get-well opponent, and the competition would steadily increase over Tyson's next few fights. It hasn't exactly worked out that way. Orlin Norris was several steps below Botha, and Julius Francis made Norris look like Joe Louis. Suddenly, Tyson-Butterbean doesn't seem so unlikely.

HEAVYWEIGHT

Best Puncher
David Tua

Best Boxer
Lennox Lewis

Most Protected
Mike Tyson

Is He *Still* Around?
Tim Witherspoon

Matchmaker's Dream
Mike Tyson-Ike Ibeabuchi

Best-Kept Secret
Luan Krasniqi

Deserves A Title Shot
David Tua

Most Fun To Watch
Derrick Jefferson

On The Way Down
Andrew Golota

Underrated
Frans Botha

Best Fight In 1999
Derrick Jefferson KO 6 Maurice Harris

Vassiliy Jirov

James Toney

CRUISERWEIGHTS

We told you last year in this section that boxing's most maligned division was becoming more entertaining and gaining the approval and acceptance of fight fans, and the forward progress continued over the past 12 months thanks to two popular fighters. One is undefeated IBF champion Vassiliy Jirov, a young banger whose three title fights, against Arthur Williams, Dale Brown, and Saul Montana, all featured great two-way action and ended in knockout wins for "The Russian Tiger." The other is two-division former champ James Toney, who came back from a layoff of nearly two years looking hungry for one last shot at glory. He hasn't been as exciting as Jirov, but what he does bring to the 190-pound picture is incentive for Roy Jones to invade. Should Toney capture a title, a rematch with superstar Jones could become the biggest fight the division has seen since Evander Holyfield-Dwight Muhammad Qawi. Interestingly, a battle between Jirov and Toney is also in the works.

Most of the other top cruiserweights are based in Europe. Jirov's WBA and WBC counterparts, Frenchman Fabrice Tiozzo and Germany-based

CRUISERWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Vassiliy Jirov

Best Boxer
James Toney

Most Protected
Alex Gonzales

Is He *Still* Around?
Robert Daniels

Matchmaker's Dream
Vassiliy Jirov-James Toney

Best-Kept Secret
Wayne Braithwaite

Deserves A Title Shot
Johnny Nelson

Most Fun To Watch
Vassiliy Jirov

On The Way Down
Adolpho Washington

Underrated
Terry McGroom

Best Fight In 1999
Carl Thompson KO 12 Terry Dunstan

Johnny Nelson pours it on against Carl Thompson

Cuban Juan Carlos Gomez, respectively, don't matter much to American fans, but they're both quality titleholders and big draws on the other side of the Atlantic. England boasts a pair of worthy contenders, the often thrilling Carl Thompson, and perennial-loser-turned-dangerous-force Johnny Nelson, whose 11-bout winning streak includes an upset kayo of Thompson last March.

Think About It: The cruiserweight division celebrated its 20th anniversary on March 31. The division is often perceived as a stopover for fighters expecting to grow into heavyweights, but thus far, only one cruiser champ, Holyfield, has held the heavyweight title. Rather than serving as a breeding ground for future heavyweights, the cruiser class has become more of a late-career haven for blown-up light heavies, as three of the 30 men who have held "world" cruiserweight titles—Qawi, Bobby Czyz, and Tiozzo—are former 175-pound titlists, and faded light heavyweight champs like Virgil Hill and Tommy Hearns are currently extending their careers at cruiser.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

Parity livened up the NFL over the past few seasons, climaxing with an unforgettable Super Bowl between the Rams and Titans instead of the usual NFC powerhouse vs. AFC also-ran schlock we had gotten used to. Unfortunately, in boxing, parity can be a little tougher to come by. Sometimes, one fighter is miles ahead of the rest of the field, and there's nothing anyone can do about it. That's definitely the case in the light heavyweight division, where you'd be hard-pressed to name five fighters capable of winning so much as a round against undisputed champ Roy Jones.

Since the last "State Of The Game," Jones won all 12 rounds against Reggie Johnson to unify the title, then won all 12 with just one good hand against David Telesco. In 24 rounds, there wasn't a hint of competitiveness, which is both a positive reflection on Jones' ability and a sad statement about how far from entertaining his fights are.

There are only two fighters with the slightest of outside shots of upsetting Jones. Germany-based Pole Dariusz Michalczewski appears to be just another tough guy who would last the distance with Jones without winning a round, but he is unbeaten through 41 fights, and there are some European fanatics who insist he can win. Then there's IBF middleweight champ Bernard Hopkins, who gave Jones a half-decent tussle seven years ago and is set to move up for a rematch in the fall of 2000.

Everyone else at light heavyweight would be best served waiting for Jones to jump up in weight or retire. Eric Harding, Lou Del Valle, Antonio Tarver, and Derrick Harmon all show promise and the potential to be the man after Jones departs.

Think About It: If only one out of every seven people are left-handed, why does it seem six out of every seven light heavy contenders are southpaws? Jones' last four opponents before facing Telesco were all lefties, and so are Graciano Rocchigiani, Michael Nunn, Richard Hall, Harding, Tarver, and Harmon.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Roy Jones

Best Boxer
Roy Jones

Most Protected
Antonio Tarver

Is He *Still* Around?
Sugarboy Malinga

Matchmaker's Dream
Roy Jones-Bernard Hopkins

Best-Kept Secret
Julian Letterlough

Deserves A Title Shot
Dariusz Michalczewski

Most Fun To Watch
Dariusz Michalczewski

On The Way Down
William Guthrie

Underrated
Greg Wright

Best Fight In 1999
Dariusz Michalczewski KO 4 Montell Griffin

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

When the likes of Nigel Benn, James Toney, Michael Nunn, Roy Jones, and Steve Collins were ruling the 168-pound roost not long ago, this was one of strongest, deepest, hottest divisions in the sport. But, boy, have times ever changed. With the possible exception of strawweight, no weight class in boxing is as weak at the top right now as the super middleweights.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Byron Mitchell

Best Boxer
Sven Ottke

Most Protected
Mario Veit

Is He *Still* Around?
Dingaan Thobela

Matchmaker's Dream
Byron Mitchell-Omar Sheika

Best-Kept Secret
James Butler

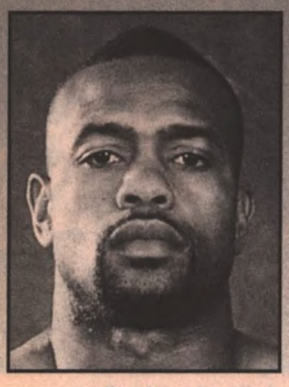
Deserves A Title Shot
Glenn Catley

Most Fun To Watch
Omar Sheika

On The Way Down
Thomas Tate

Underrated
Guillermo Jones

Best Fight In 1999
Thomas Tate KO 10 Merqui Sosa



Roy Jones

Dariusz Michalczewski

Antonio Tarver

Byron Mitchell

Omar Sheika

Sven Ottke

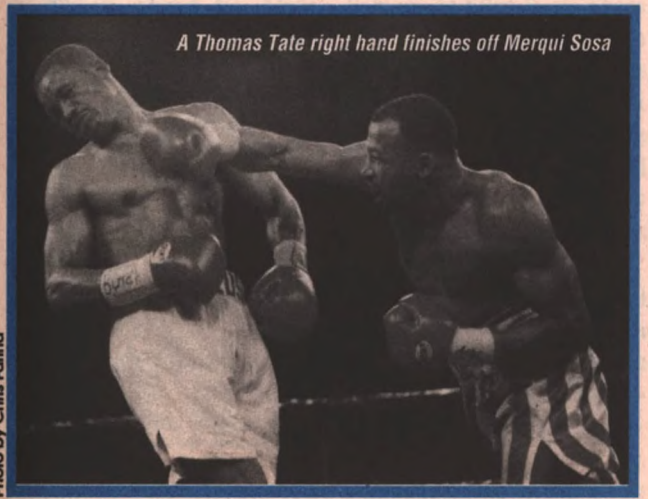
IBF champ Sven Ottke is number one in THE RING's ratings, but that's more or less by default. The feather-fisted German slickster has been steady in tallying four defenses since upsetting Charles Brewer in '98, but that's about the best you can say about him. WBA titlist Byron Mitchell has a tremendous punch, but coupled with remarkable hesitance to let his fists go, it's safe to say he was lucky to catch Frankie Liles at the right time and luckier still to escape with a draw against Bruno Girard in his first defense. WBC champ Markus Beyer is the most unproven of this unproven lot, as he knocked off mediocre Richie Woodhall last October and has since made one meaningless defense. Then there's Welshman Joe Calzaghe, who was dubbed the future of this division when he dominated Chris Eubank 2½ years ago. Calzaghe has since been beset by injuries, and in his most recent outing, turned off audiences all across America with a horrid win over David Starie on Showtime.

Farther down the rankings, there are a handful of bright spots. Omar Sheika and James Butler are both exciting young punchers, though the boxing skills of both are suspect. Canadian Syd Vanderpool seems a more complete package, but he hasn't faced any top opposition yet.

Think About It: Starting with Sugarboy Malinga ending Nigel Benn's lengthy reign in March '96, the WBC 168-pound belt has changed hands six times in four years, including at least once in each calendar year. You may want to hold on to that money you were about to bet on Markus Beyer.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

1999 was a year of comebacks in the middleweight division. Ex-convict Tony Ayala Jr., who says he may eventually end up at junior middle but so far hasn't fought below 160 pounds, came back from a 17-year absence and appears on his way to becoming a title contender once again. Lonnie Bradley came back from a detached retina and is working his way back into the fray. WBA champ William Joppy came back from neck injuries suffered in an automobile accident to destroy Julio Cesar Green in their rubber match. WBC titlist Keith Holmes came back from his upset loss to Hassine Cherifi in '98 and regained the belt via TKO in their rematch. And the world's best middleweight, IBF king Bernard Hopkins, came back from a promotional dispute and a 10-month layoff to school Antwun Echols in one of the finest performances of his career.

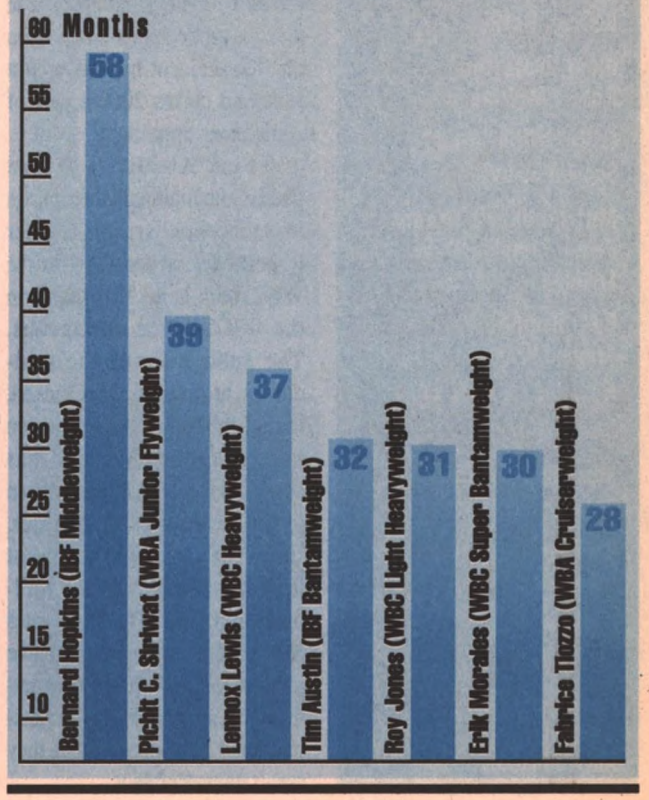


A Thomas Tate right hand finishes off Merqui Sosa

Photo by Chris Farina

LONGEST-REIGNING CHAMPIONS

The following graph displays the game's most established champions, along with the number of consecutive months each has held the title. You'll notice that we've experienced almost a complete turnover from last year, as six of the seven longest-reigning champs as of last March no longer have those titles. Ricardo Lopez and Felix Trinidad both vacated to move up in weight, and Frankie Liles, Saman Sorjaturong, Luisito Espinosa, and Evander Holyfield were all defeated. Only middleweight champ Bernard Hopkins returns from last year's list.



Bernard Hopkins

William Joppy

MIDDLEWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Bernard Hopkins

Best Boxer
Bernard Hopkins

Most Protected
Robert McCracken

Is He *Still* Around?
Saoul Mamby

Matchmaker's Dream
Bernard Hopkins-Felix Trinidad

Best-Kept Secret
Armand Krajnc

Deserves A Title Shot
Davey Hilton

Most Fun To Watch
Antwun Echols

On The Way Down
Julio Cesar Green

Underrated
Bert Schenk

Best Fight In 1999
Bernard Hopkins W 12
Antwun Echols

Photo by Teddy Blackburn

Tony Ayala Jr. gets back into shape

But what does it say about the middleweight division that when Hopkins lists the other fighters he'd most like to face, he never names any other 160-pounders? He always mentions Roy Jones, David Reid, and Fernando Vargas, but guys like Joppy and Holmes aren't even worth his breath. So don't expect this title to get unified anytime soon.

Oh, and speaking of comebacks, here's hoping Otis Grant, a top middleweight contender and one of boxing's true nice guys, recovers fully from the car accident he was in last June and makes 2000 a year of comebacks as well.

Think About It: At first glance, the high alphabet ratings of mediocre British fighter Robert McCracken (first in the WBC, third in the IBF, eighth in the WBA) seem outrageous. The John Ruiz of the middleweight division, McCracken, though undefeated, has beaten no real contenders and has struggled to get past journeymen in his recent trips to America. But at the same time, there just isn't much depth to the middleweight field. THE RING rates McCracken seventh, and we aren't about to call our own ratings corrupt. McCracken's rankings may be unearned, but they aren't unjustifiable.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS

As the left hook crashed into the chin of David Reid in the seventh round, sending him into a daze that he wouldn't be able to shake until after the final bell had sounded, the face of the 154-pound division was drastically altered. Finally, the welterweight superstars had arrived on the junior middle scene, and, more specifically, Felix Trinidad had arrived—in style. The already talented junior middleweight class, featuring the likes of Reid, Fernando Vargas, Harry Simon, and Winky Wright, had adopted the first of those even bigger names from seven pounds to the south, setting in motion a year likely to be filled with 154-pound superfights.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Felix Trinidad

Best Boxer
Felix Trinidad

Most Protected
Francisco Castillejo

Is He *Still* Around?
Buck Smith

Matchmaker's Dream
Felix Trinidad-Fernando Vargas

Best-Kept Secret
Wayne Alexander

Deserves A Title Shot
Harry Simon

Most Fun To Watch
Fernando Vargas

On The Way Down
Yory Boy Campas

Underrated
Kevin Kelly

Best Fight In 1999
Fernando Vargas W 12
Winky Wright

Trinidad's unanimous-decision win over Reid on March 3, coupled with the Hall of Fame credentials he put together at welterweight, make him, for the moment, the man to beat at junior middle. But that could change depending upon the result of the highly intriguing April battle between Vargas and

Felix Trinidad

Francisco Castillejo

Photo by Michael Blair

Fernando Vargas and Winky Wright duke it out

former WBA welter champ Ike Quartey, which was still a few weeks away as we went to press. Simon, like Vargas and Trinidad, boasts an undefeated record, and HBO has shown interest in giving the Namibian some U.S. exposure. Wright, who lost close decisions to both Simon and Vargas, is still the guy nobody wants to fight, and Reid showed enough character in falling to Trinidad to suggest he'll be back in the championship picture in no time. The only weak link near the top of the class is Spanish WBC champ Francisco Castillejo, who has been feasting exclusively on third-rate challengers and could easily lose the title to anyone else in THE RING's top 10.

Think About It: After Trinidad's win over Reid, the Puerto Rican star and his promoter, Don King, did a lot of bragging about how "Tito" had beaten three U.S. Olympic gold medalists—Reid, Oscar De La Hoya, and Pernell Whitaker. But Trinidad's definitely not the only boxer in history who can make that claim. A certain fairly famous fellow by the name of Muhammad Ali, himself a U.S. Olympic gold medalist, counted fellow American gold winners Joe Frazier, George Foreman, and Leon Spinks among his victims.

WELTERWEIGHTS

After endless months spent waiting for all those 147-pound superfights to materialize, they finally did in '99. But the results were disappointing, and now several of the main players have moved up to junior middleweight. Fear not, though, welterweight fans. The division's top star, Oscar De La Hoya, isn't leaving this weight class anytime soon, and there are still plenty of attractive fights for "The Golden Boy."

First up will be a guaranteed barnburner with former lightweight titlist Sugar Shane Mosley, whose explosive arrival on the welter scene has made the departure of Felix Trinidad (up in weight), Ike Quartey (up in weight), and Pernell Whitaker (seemingly retired) bearable. That bout is set for June.

De La Hoya says he will then fight two more times in 2000. One of those may be a catchweight fight with Trinidad, but there are several tantalizing options for the other. Foremost among them is a bout with Olympic teammate Vernon Forrest, who probably isn't quite on the level of the De La Hoyas and Mosleys, but with a 31-0 (25) record, certainly deserves a chance to prove otherwise. Another intriguing fight, though it seems a long shot to happen, is a match with physically imposing WBA champ James Page.

De La Hoya has said repeatedly of his 2000 campaign, "Four fights, four knockouts." If he makes good on that promise, chances are he'll have another Fighter of the Year belt to add to his collection.

Think About It: Before giving up the IBF welter title, Trinidad shattered Freddie Cochrane's record for length of a welterweight title reign. Cochrane held the title from July 29, 1941, to February 1, 1946, a reign of 4½ years. "Tito" was IBF champ from June 19, 1993, until his March 2000 fight with David Reid, more than a 6½-year stretch.

WELTERWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Oscar De La Hoya

Best Boxer
Oscar De La Hoya

Most Protected
Shannan Taylor

Is He *Still* Around?
Frankie Randall

Matchmaker's Dream
Oscar De La Hoya-Shane Mosley

Best-Kept Secret
Kofi Jantuah

Deserves A Title Shot
Vernon Forrest

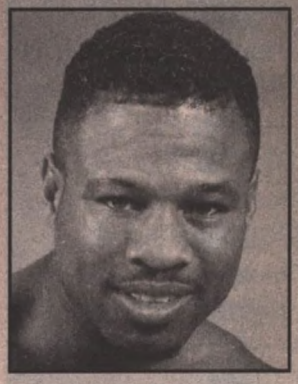
Most Fun To Watch
Shane Mosley

On The Way Down
Vince Phillips

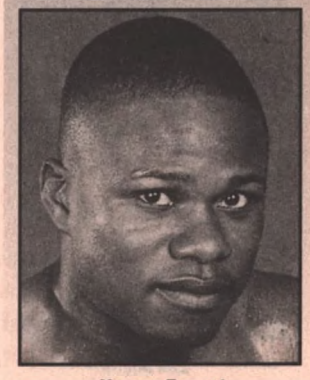
Underrated
James Page

Best Fight In 1999
Felix Trinidad W 12
Pernell Whitaker

Oscar De La Hoya



Shane Mosley



Vernon Forrest

James Page

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS

Whatever you're looking for, the junior welter division has it.

You want punchers? Leading the way is Kostya Tszyu, the WBC champ, who crushed the granite-chinned Miguel Angel Gonzalez in a way that was as painful to watch as any fight in '99. Then there's Randall Bailey, whose left hook, probably the single best punch in the division, leveled Bolillo Gonzalez in just 41 seconds last May. And don't forget Antonio Diaz, who routinely beats superior boxers by plugging away until his heavy hands catch up with them.

You want boxers? WBA champ Sharmba Mitchell, a slick southpaw with exceptional footwork and grace, is one of the finest around. So is Ivan Robinson, who is set to move up from the lightweight division to bring his brand of high-output, quick-fisted action to the 140-pound ranks.

You want guys who promise excitement? Look no further than Arturo Gatti, the most thrilling fighter in the game. Or how about Mickey Ward, who has repeatedly shown that Gatti-like ability to come back from the brink of defeat and will his way to unthinkably dramatic wins. And across the Atlantic, there's Shea Neary, who is often referred to as the British Gatti.

And then there's Zab Judah. The new IBF champ has a destructive punch, mind-boggling boxing skills, and the flair to make his fights explosive and exciting. Judah can do it all, and seems to be the future of a division that's doing just fine for itself at the present.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Kostya Tszyu

Best Boxer
Zab Judah

Most Protected
Cesar Leiva

Is He *Still* Around?
Rafael Ruelas

Matchmaker's Dream
Kostya Tszyu-Zab Judah

Best-Kept Secret
Teddy Reid

Deserves A Title Shot
Terronn Millett

Most Fun To Watch
Arturo Gatti

On The Way Down
Miguel Angel Gonzalez

Underrated
Marlon Thomas

Best Fight In 1999
Mickey Ward KO 10
Reggie Green

Kostya Tszyu

Zab Judah

Photo by Angie Carlino

Reggie Green and Mickey Ward go to war

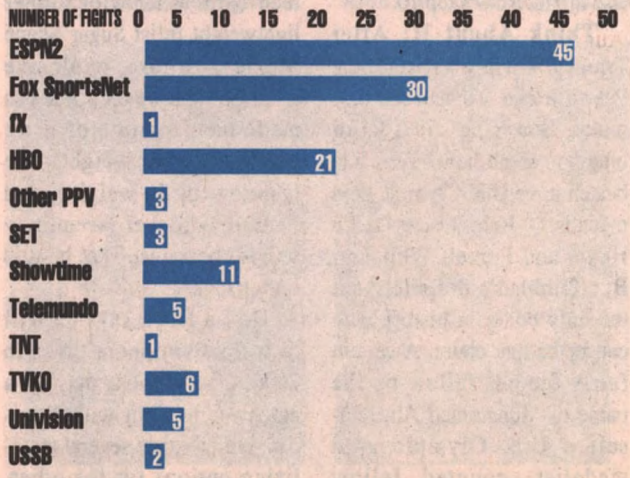
Think About It: ESPN2's Max Kellerman, perhaps the world's biggest Judah fan, has always made a cautionary point of likening Judah to Ed Hopson, another Main Events fighter who seemed destined for stardom ... until he got blown out by Tracy Patterson. When Judah won the IBF title in February, the comparison became even more conspicuous. Like Hopson, he won a gift-wrapped, vacant title against a second-rate opponent rather than having to go through a champion to get there. Ultimately, the IBF's decision to strip Terronn Millett and clear the road for Judah may hurt the Brooklynite as much as it hurt Millett.

LIGHTWEIGHTS

When Sugar Shane Mosley abandoned the lightweight division last April, it appeared that his departure might precipitate a lean period for the 135-pound class. He was perceived as the division's best puncher and best boxer, and, not surprisingly, was the 135-pound class' biggest star.

BOXING ON TV

Thanks in part to the fact that there wasn't a single fight broadcast on any of the free networks in 1999, the total number of live cards shown on television slipped to 133, down from the '98 tally of 143. Here's a breakdown: (Note: "Other PPV" represents pay-per-view shows distributed by someone other than SET or TVKO)



LIGHTWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Victoriano Sosa

Best Boxer
Stevie Johnston

Most Protected
Daniel Attah

Is He *Still* Around?
Jean-Baptiste Mendy

Matchmaker's Dream
Stevie Johnston-Paul Spadafora

Best-Kept Secret
Lovemore Ndou

Deserves A Title Shot
Artur Grigorijan

Most Fun To Watch
Angel Manfredy

On The Way Down
Israel Cardona

Underrated
James Crayton

Best Fight In 1999
Stevie Johnston W 12
Cesar Bazan

Stevie Johnston's southpaw jab freezes Angel Manfredy

Photo by Marty Rosengarten

Now, those superlatives are split between a few different guys, and, in a development few could have anticipated, the division is stronger for it.

WBC champ Stevie Johnston stepped up to the plate so strongly in '99 that he garnered serious Fighter of the Year consideration. His performance against Angel Manfredy last August proved him to be not only the finest technician in the lightweight division, but perhaps on the entire planet.

Paul Spadafora

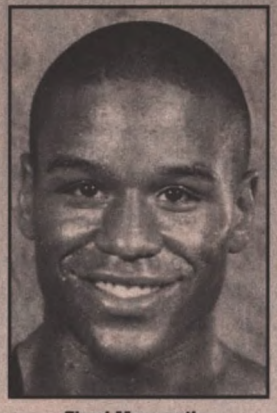
The mantle of the division's top star has probably fallen on Manfredy, who, despite the loss to Johnston, remains a colorful character and a dangerous contender who is always willing to meet any challenge. The Johnston loss was sandwiched between a sensational win over Ivan Robinson and a brutal knockout of Sean Fletcher, both of which have helped us forget the erstwhile "El Diablo's" recent defeats.

As for the question of who has taken over for Mosley as the biggest puncher in the lightweight class, there is no easy answer. The division is overloaded with exceptional boxers, like Johnston, Manfredy, and the man who replaced Mosley as IBF champion, impressive newcomer Paul Spadafora. So while this division may not give you a lot of *bang* for your buck, there's plenty there to cure the Sugar craving of true fans of the Sweet Science.

Think About It: The WBA lightweight belt really gets around. It changed hands three times in '99 (Jean-Baptiste Mendy lost it to Julien Lorcy, who lost it in his first defense to Stefano Zoff, who lost it in his first defense to current champ Gilbert Serrano), the most nomadic any major strap has been since '96, when the WBA super middleweight and WBA junior flyweight titles both went through three ownership shifts.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

Nobody likes a one-horse race, which is what this division was threatening to become when Floyd Mayweather destroyed Genaro Hernandez and Angel Manfredy in succession in '98, leaving himself with no apparent remaining challenges. But a second stallion pulled up within about a length of "Pretty Boy Floyd" toward the end of '99, giving us something to look forward to at 130 pounds. Mayweather's still unquestionably the man at junior lightweight, but IBF champ Diego Corrales is young, strong, and capable of pushing the WBC king harder than anyone has to date.



Floyd Mayweather

Diego Corrales

Corrales was just another solid-looking prospect with potential until he kayoed previously unbeaten Roberto Garcia last October to emerge as the number-two force in the division. And fortunately for box-

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Diego Corrales

Best Boxer
Floyd Mayweather

Most Protected
Robbie Peden

Is He *Still* Around?
Tracy Patterson

Matchmaker's Dream
Floyd Mayweather-Diego Corrales

Best-Kept Secret
Acelino Freitas

Deserves A Title Shot
Jesus Chavez

Most Fun To Watch
Floyd Mayweather

On The Way Down
Roberto Garcia

Underrated
John Brown

Best Fight In 1999
Diego Corrales KO 7
Roberto Garcia

ing fans, "Chico" and Mayweather are both promoted by Top Rank, meaning that a unification match shouldn't be too hard to put together.

And it's not at all inconceivable that this could turn into more than just a two-horse race. Other young hopefuls from around the globe include Mexican Jesus Chavez (assuming he can ever get back into the U.S.), Cuban Olympian Joel Casamayor, and Brazilian flamethrower Acelino Freitas. There's plenty of depth at 130 in the Orient as well, with WBA champ Jongkwon Baek leading the way and former champs Lakva Sim, Yongsoo Choi, and recently unretired Takanori Hatakeyama not far behind.

Think About It: Freitas upped his record to a perfect 24-0 with 24 knockouts when he disposed of Barry Jones in January, but he's still a long way away from the all-time record for consecutive knockouts at the start of a career. That distinction belongs to Billy Fox (most famous for being the guy against whom Jake LaMotta admitted to throwing a fight), who kayoed his first 43 opponents.

FEATHERWEIGHTS

As Naseem Hamed goes, so go the featherweights, and until his recent win over Vuyani Bungu, Naz hadn't been going much of anywhere. "The Prince's" '99 campaign saw him come dangerously close to losing to Paul Ingle before pulling out an 11th-round knockout, do everything in his power to avoid mandatory challenger Juan Manuel Marquez, and bodyslam Cesar Soto en route to an embarrassing, almost unwatchable decision win. Of course, when all's said and done, Hamed is still undefeated and still the number-one featherweight in the world. But he's not the attraction he was two years ago, nor half the attraction he seemed on pace to be by now.

Photo by Teddy Blackburn

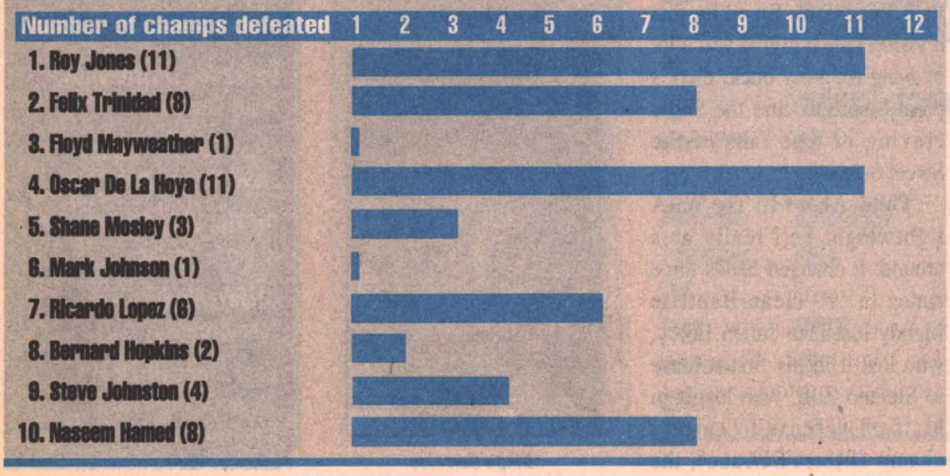
Prince Naseem Hamed gets his hands wrapped by Manny Steward

Fred Norwood

So as we all cross our fingers and hope for the cocky Arab Englishman to finally get smoked, the question becomes, who can do it? WBA champ Fred Norwood, though a tough, unbeaten lefty, is probably not fast enough for The Prince. IBF champ Ingle couldn't quite pull out a win on Hamed's worst night, so don't expect him to fare much better in a rematch. Both Luisito Espinosa and Guty Espadas, who were set to meet in April for the WBC title vacated by Hamed, would be healthy underdogs. Marquez looked to be the goods until his disappointing fight with Norwood last September, and Argentine prospect Julio Pablo Chacon is

CHAMPS vs. CHAMPS

One of the best ways to determine a champion's worth is to count the number of other world champions he's defeated. Here's a look at how THE RING's pound-for-pound entrants rate in that department:



FEATHERWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Naseem Hamed

Best Boxer
Naseem Hamed

Most Protected
Angel Vazquez

Is He *Still* Around?
Juan Polo-Perez

Matchmaker's Dream
Naseem Hamed-Erik Morales

Best-Kept Secret
Julio Pablo Chacon

Deserves A Title Shot
Luisito Espinosa

Most Fun To Watch
Paul Ingle

On The Way Down
Kevin Kelley

Underrated
Frankie Toledo

Best Fight In 1999
Paul Ingle W 12
Manuel Medina

Paul Ingle clocks Manuel Medina with a left

still several fights away from being ready.

The best bets to beat Naz are a couple of junior featherweights who both fought like champions in their war this past February: Erik Morales, who has already announced his intention to move up to 126 pounds this summer, and Marco Antonio Barrera, who has speed, power, and the busy, ferocious style needed to give Hamed fits.

Think About It: Here's some bass-ackward logic for you. The WBO told Hamed last May that he could make two more voluntary defenses before facing Marquez, since Naz wanted an opportunity to unify the featherweight title. Then, when Hamed added the WBC belt, the WBO told him he's not allowed to hold both titles, forcing him to give up the WBC strap. Hadn't they just told him to go unify rather than face his long-overdue mandatory? Can anyone explain this?

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

We all knew the February 19 Erik Morales-Marco Antonio Barrera fight was going to be a keeper, but who could have guessed it would so exceed our already high expectations? The two Mexican warriors gave all they had for 12 rounds of nonstop brutality, and though the decision was a minor ripoff—the wrong guy, Morales, got the nod, but the fight was very close all the way around—there's little reason to be unhappy. We got a great fight, and there are plenty of possibilities for more memorable encounters at 122 pounds.

With Morales announcing his intention to move up to 126 pounds (though he was still the WBC super bantam champ at press time), Barrera ascends, unquestionably, to the top spot at junior feather. Not far behind, though, is new WBA kingpin Bones Adams, who looked sensational in taking the title from Nestor Garza in March. Garza remains in the mix as well, as he's another always exciting Mexican who could create a brawl with Barrera every bit as good as the Morales fight. Then there's Wayne McCullough, who has proven his worth (and his granite chin) in tough losses to Morales and Naseem Hamed. IBF champ Lehlo Ledwaba shows promise, although the South African's handlers have admitted he became a champion a bit too soon and will be matched carefully for the moment. Add in exciting former world champions Enrique Sanchez, Manny Pacquiao, and Danny Romero, and you're left with a division that should continue to thrive even without Morales.

Lehlo Ledwaba

Bones Adams

Think About It: Compu-Box statistics should never be

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Marco Antonio Barrera

Best Boxer
Erik Morales

Most Protected
Lehlo Ledwaba

Is He *Still* Around?
John Michael Johnson

Matchmaker's Dream
Marco Antonio Barrera-Nestor Garza

Best-Kept Secret
Carlos Contreras

Deserves A Title Shot
Manny Pacquiao

Most Fun To Watch
Erik Morales

On The Way Down
Antonio Cermeno

Underrated
Arthur Johnson

Best Fight In 1999
Erik Morales W 12 Wayne McCullough

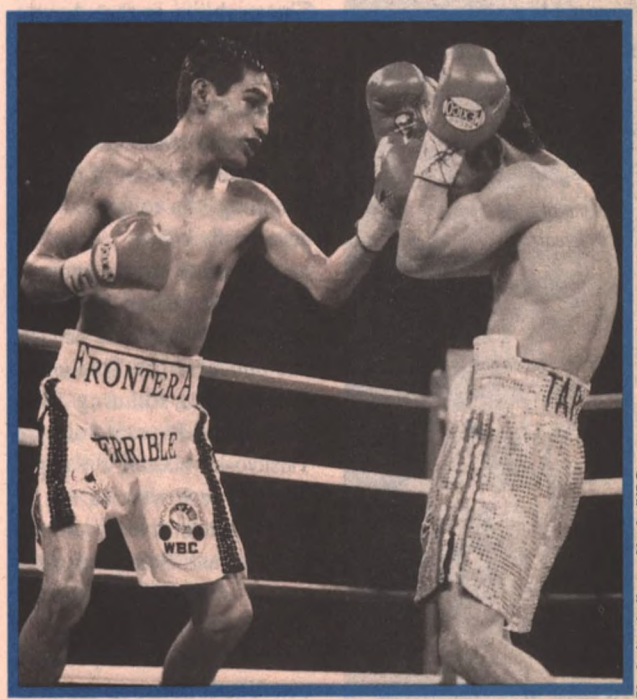


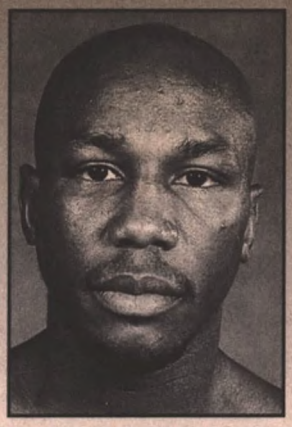
Photo by Anthony Nesle/HBO

Erik Morales slugs it out with Marco Antonio Barrera

relied on to tell you who won a fight, but they can still be very useful. Comparing Morales' performances against Barrera and McCullough, we see his offensive output was virtually the same in both fights: He landed 319 of 868 punches against Barrera and 341 of 917 against McCullough, for identical 37 percent connect rates. But the Barrera fight was much tougher because, not only was Barrera a bigger puncher than McCullough, but he was also far more accurate. The Mexican found Morales with 48 percent of the 618 shots he threw, while the busy Irishman connected with just 25 percent of his 928 punches.

BANTAMWEIGHTS

1999 was a breakout year for the bantamweights, at least as far as THE RING awards are concerned. For the first time ever, a fight between 118-pounders, Paulie Ayala's win over Johnny Tapia for the WBA title, was named Fight of the Year. And for just the second time since THE RING began naming the Fighter of the Year in 1928, a bantamweight, Ayala, took home the award (the other was Carlos Zarate in 1977). And the incredible thing is it's very possible that neither Ayala nor Tapia is the best fighter in the division.



Tim Austin

Johnny Tapia

Paulie Ayala

BANTAMWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Tim Austin

Best Boxer
Johnny Tapia

Most Protected
Tim Austin

Is He *Still* Around?
Victor Rabanales

Matchmaker's Dream
Paulie Ayala-Johnny Tapia II

Best-Kept Secret
Hugo Dianzo

Deserves A Title Shot
Johnny Tapia

Most Fun To Watch
Paulie Ayala

On The Way Down
Nana Konadu

Underrated
Jorge Lacierva

Best Fight In 1999
Paulie Ayala W 12
Johnny Tapia

He hasn't done as much to prove it, but undefeated IBF champ Tim Austin, with his lanky build and exceptional power, looks like the best fighter in this weight class. The problem is that Austin fought just twice in '99, knocking out a pair of no-names. Until Don King decides to push Austin to the fore and make a star out of him by matching him tougher, we'll never really know.

One thing we do know is that WBC champ Veerapol Sahaprom is a terribly dangerous puncher. The Thailander repeated his stunning 1998 sixth-round kayo of Joichiro Tatsuyoshi, blasting the popular Japanese warrior out in seven rounds in their rematch last August. Sahaprom then easaly outpointed capable Adan Vargas in March.

One thing worth pointing out: You'll notice in the sidebar that we've named Tapia the bantamweight division's best boxer, even though he lost on points to the slick Ayala. For those who feel Ayala deserves the designation, remember that he beat Tapia by *outbrawling* him, while we feel the veteran from Albuquerque remains the superior technician.

Think About It: A 63-year-old record was equalled this year when Austin kayoed Bernardo Mendoza in just 1 minute 49 seconds, exactly the amount of time it took Sixto Escobar to stop Indian Quintana in 1936, previously the shortest bantamweight title fight ever.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

It wasn't quite as earth-shaking as hearing that Mike Tyson had been convicted of rape, but when the news broke in February that Mark "Too Sharp" Johnson was serving up to a year in prison for parole violation after assaulting his wife, it at least set the junior bantamweight division on its ear. Far and away the best 115-pounder in the world, Johnson had a fine '99 campaign, dominating Ratanachai Vorapin to win the vacant IBF title, winning a technical decision over talented Jorge Lacierva, and battering Raul Juarez for four rounds before having to settle for a controversial no-contest. But all the punches he threw inside the ring were overshadowed by the one that broke his wife's jaw and removed him, at least temporarily, from the boxing scene.

Beyond Too Sharp, there isn't much of interest in the 115-pound ranks, especially for American fans. WBC champ In Joo Cho, despite tallying three more defenses since the last

Mark Johnson

Eric Morel

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Mark Johnson

Best Boxer
Mark Johnson

Most Protected
Jesper Jensen

Is He *Still* Around?
Leo Gamez

Matchmaker's Dream
Mark Johnson-Eric Morel

Best-Kept Secret
Adonis Rivas

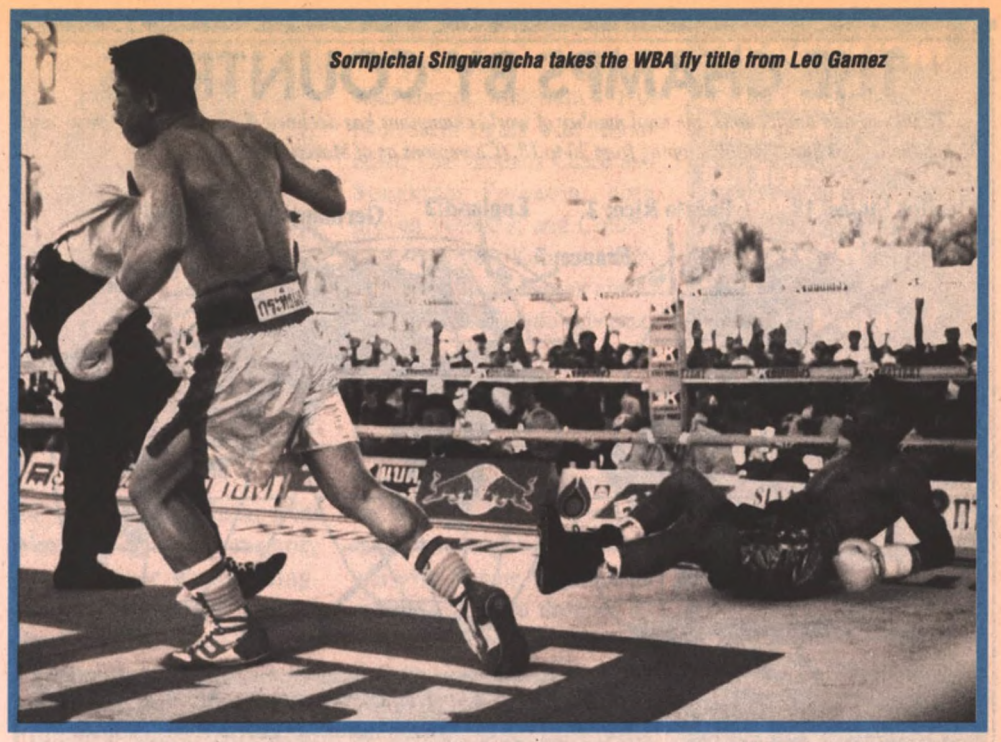
Deserves A Title Shot
Eric Morel

Most Fun To Watch
Mark Johnson

On The Way Down
Ysaias Zamudio

Underrated
Samson Toyota-Thailand

Best Fight In 1999
Hideki Todaka W 12
Jesus Rojas



Sornpichai Singwangcha takes the WBA fly title from Leo Gamez

"State Of The Game," is a dreadfully boring runner. WBA titlist Hideki Todaka looks like he could develop into a force, but remains very unproven at this juncture.

The only American hopeful worth watching is Eric Morel, but the '96 Olympian is terribly inconsistent, looking like a future Hall of Famer one fight and looking like the second coming of In Joo Cho the next.

Think About It: The answer to that sure-to-be-oft-asked trivia question, "What was the first world title fight of the new millennium?": Cho's split-decision win over former champ Gerry Penalosa on January 2 in Seoul, South Korea. Commit that one to memory.

FLYWEIGHTS

The 112-pound division has never been boxing's most glamorous, but with greats like Jimmy Wilde, Miguel Canto, and, more recently, Mark Johnson, leading the way, the flyweight class generally managed to remain somewhat relevant. Nowadays, unless you live in Thailand, the flys are about as relevant as a weather report to a shut-in.

The strange thing is that all three champs at flyweight boast undefeated records, a distinction only the junior lightweights and the dreaded super middleweights shared at press time. But as far as the flyweight champs go, that fine stat is essentially just a result of their inexperience.

Irene Pacheco

Sornpichai Singwangcha won the WBA crown in a wild affair with Leo Gamez last September and, although tremendously exciting, showed a lot of vulnerability to go with his lack of world-class seasoning. Medgoen Toyota-Thailand, the WBC champ, is even more unproven, having taken the title from Manny Pacquiao in September '99 primarily because the Filipino showed up overweight and ill-prepared. Colombian Irene Pacheco, the IBF champ, won the title vacated by Johnson in impressive fashion and has chalked up two defenses, including an eye-opening kayo of Pedro Pena on ESPN2 in January. But, despite his obvious promise, "Mambaco" is going to have trouble finding enough good competition to make a bigger name for himself in the States.

Think About It: Californian Isidro Garcia made headlines last December when he won the WBO fly belt from Jose Lopez fighting as a last-minute substitute. But should he ever have gotten the title shot? Garcia weighed in at 123 pounds—11 pounds and four divisions over the flyweight limit. This was considered acceptable since Lopez had

FLYWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Sornpichai Singwangcha

Best Boxer
Irene Pacheco

Most Protected
Alex Ali Baba

Is He *Still* Around?
Saen Sor Ploenchit

Matchmaker's Dream
Sornpichai Singwangcha-Medgoen Toyota-Thailand

Best-Kept Secret
Isidro Garcia

Deserves A Title Shot
Chatchai Dutchboy Gym

Most Fun To Watch
Sornpichai Singwangcha

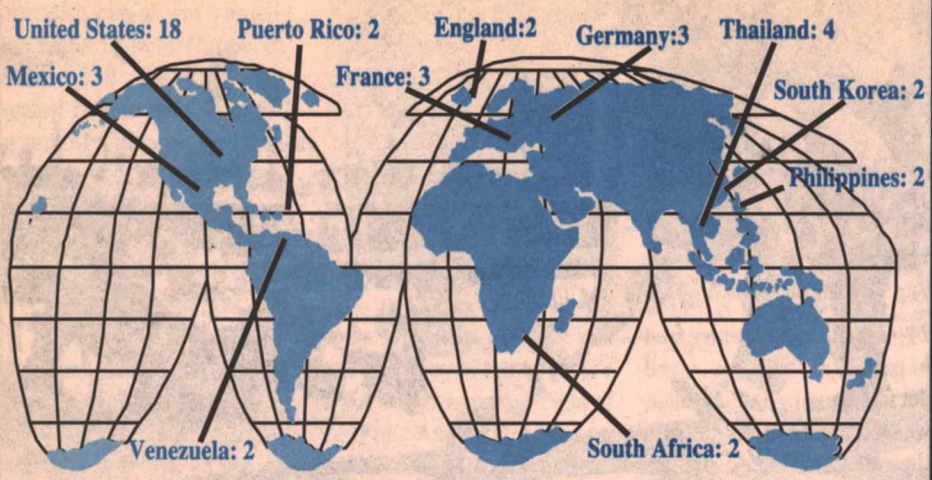
On The Way Down
Jesus Chong

Underrated
David Guerault

Best Fight In 1999
Sornpichai Singwangcha
KO 8 Leo Gamez

THE CHAMPS BY COUNTRIES

Thanks to title unifications, the total number of world champions has declined slightly from last year, and so has the United States' total, slipping from 20 to 18. (Champions as of March 23, 2000)



Seven countries tied with 1: •Australia •Colombia •France •Japan •Kazakhstan •Puerto Rico •Spain

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Rosendo Alvarez

Best Boxer
Ricardo Lopez

Most Protected
Hidenobu Honda

Is He *Still* Around?
Baby Jake Matlala

Matchmaker's Dream
Ricardo Lopez-Michael Carbajal

Best-Kept Secret
Hawk Makepula

Deserves A Title Shot
Melchor Cob-Castro

Most Fun To Watch
Michael Carbajal

On The Way Down
Saman Sorjaturong

Underrated
Yeosam Choi

Best Fight In 1999
Michael Carbajal KO 11 Jorge Arce

ballooned up to 122 pounds since the weigh-in the day before. But should the rules be bent just to satisfy desperate matchmakers? Just because you need to fill out a card doesn't mean you can't do so with a non-title fight.

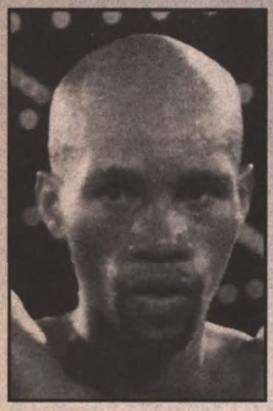
JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

Ricardo Lopez vs. Michael Carbajal. The greatest strawweight of all-time vs. arguably the greatest junior flyweight ever. It makes the boxing fan's mouth water, and it would surely put a little extra weight in the pockets of these tiny titans. But there's just one little catch: Both guys are seriously considering retirement.

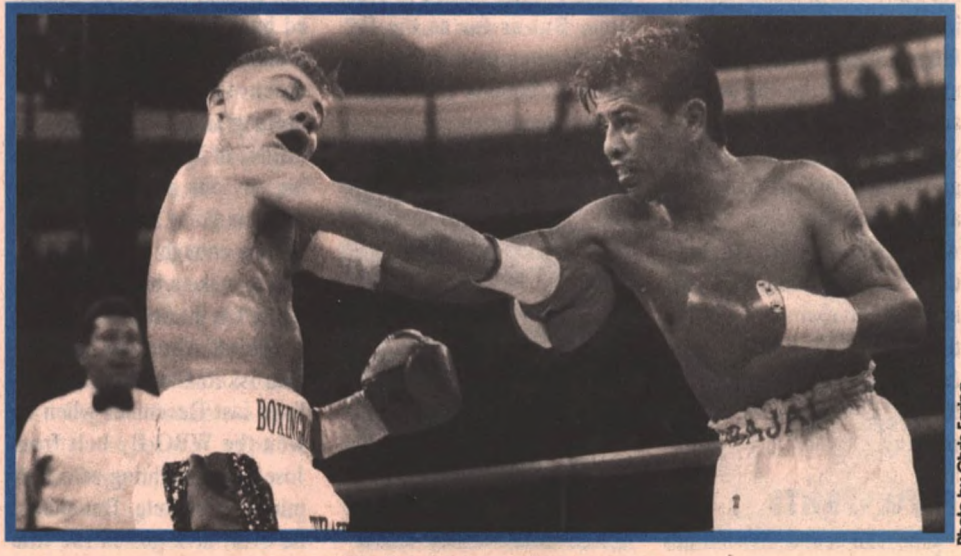
That would be a shame for the sport and for the junior fly class, but for the fighters, both of whom have taken their share of punches, it's hard to object to them taking the safe route. Still, it would really be something if the future Hall of Famers could finish their careers with the superfight that has been about a decade in the making.

If Lopez, who became a two-division champ by claiming the IBF 108-pound title last October, and Carbajal, who resurrected his career with a come-from-behind kayo of

Ricardo Lopez



Hawk Makepula



Michael Carbajal digs deep and upsets Jorge Arce

Photo by Chris Farina

young Jorge Arce last July, do call it quits, where would that leave the division? Not in such bad shape, actually. WBA champ Pichit C. Siriwat has reigned for over three years and tallied five title defenses, placing him among the most established champions in the lower weight classes. Yeosam Choi looks like the real thing after upsetting Saman Sorjaturong for the WBC title last October, and Sorjaturong could remain in the picture for a little while longer himself. Then there's Rosendo Alvarez, the Nicaraguan who gave Lopez the two toughest fights of his career, and undefeated South African Masibulele "Hawk" Makepula, who outpointed veteran Baby Jake Matlala in February. Throw in guys like Arce and former IBF champ Will Grigsby, and you'll see the 108-pounders are pretty deep even if Lopez and Carbajal pack it in.

Think About It: This may be a fairly deep division, but it's also a very old division. The average age of THE RING's top 10 junior flyweights is 30 years, a surprising fact in light of the theory that smaller fighters don't usually last as long as their heavier counterparts.

STRAWWEIGHTS

What is there to say about boxing's smallest division that we didn't say last year? With Ricardo Lopez gone, strawweight boxing is about as popular in North America as rhythmic gymnastics is at your average fraternity house. But that's not to say there aren't any fighters worth talking about here. In fact, there's a young Mexican who just hit the scene who may have the potential to fill at least a couple of toes in Lopez' legendary shoes.

Jose Antonio Aguirre, a

Zolani Petelo

24-year-old switch-hitter from Mexico City, won a majority decision over Wandee Singwangcha in February to claim the WBC belt, and has the potential to be the best in the division. At the moment, however, that mantle belongs to South African IBF champ Zolani Petelo, also 24, who, since shocking Ratanapol Vorapin for the title in '97, has breezed through four credible challengers. The WBA title is held by 25-year-old Noel Arambulet, a Venezuelan with a limited record but good boxing skills.

Among the others in the 105-pound mix: Colombian Jose Garcia, who went 1-1 in two recent fights with Arambulet; Thai brothers Chana and Songkram Porpaoin, both proven veterans; and Colombian southpaw Kermin Guardia, whose only losses are to Lopez and Rosendo Alvarez, arguably the two best 105-pounders of the '90s.

Think About It: How do you lose a title in a non-title bout? Ask Songkram Porpaoin. He won the WBA "interim" minimumweight title with a win over Ronnie Magramo in January '99, then dropped an over-the-weight 10-round decision to Hiroshi Matsumoto a few months later. When Lopez finally vacated the WBA throne, instead of the interim champ being installed as the full titlist, Arambulet fought Joma Gamboa for the vacant strap. Believe it or not, though, this is one WBA ruling that we support. Since an interim champ is really nothing more than a number-one contender who has to pay sanctioning fees, it follows that a loss should cost him his number-one contender status. ■

STRAWWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Zolani Petelo

Best Boxer
Jose Antonio Aguirre

Most Protected
Daniel Reyes

Is He *Still* Around?
Manny Melchor

Matchmaker's Dream
Zolani Petelo-Jose Antonio Aguirre

Best-Kept Secret
Hiroshi Nakajima

Deserves A Title Shot
Chana Porpaoin

Most Fun To Watch
Wandee Singwangcha

On The Way Down
Eric Jamili

Underrated
Jose Garcia

Best Fight In 1999
Wandee Singwangcha KO 12 Wolf Tokimitsu

Jose Antonio Aguirre celebrates title win over Wandee Singwangcha

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"I PRESSED, I HURT HIM, & I BEAT HIM"

There Was Nothing More Barrera Could Do But Get Screwed!

By Brian Doogan

It is not often that a fight so stirs the blood that the greater danger is to overawed spectators, not the participants. Erik Morales and Marco Antonio Barrera warred so furiously for singular subjugation of Mexico that perhaps the only reason boxing did not experience a heart failure epidemic was that the action was too compelling to succumb to such an awful inconvenience.

If the heart had to go out to either in the end, it would be to Barrera—bizarrely a 4-1 betting underdog with Las Vegas sports books—who in all likelihood would not only have protected Texas, California, and New Mexico from American annexation had he been around in the 1830s and '40s, but subsequently taken on the Confederacy, the Union, and Canada as well. His remorseless, productively channeled fury negated Morales' superior skill and drew the younger man

Barrera is carried around the ring after the final round of his war with Morales, certain that he has claimed the WBC super bantamweight title. Moments later, ring announcer Michael Buffer would have some bad news for the Mexican veteran.

Photo by Allsport

Barrera and Morales fought with incredible desire and kept up a wicked pace, putting together a very strong Fight of the Year candidate. Though he didn't get the decision, Barrera proved he had come all the way back from his losses to Junior Jones.

Photo by Anthony Neste/HBO

into a war he needed to avoid to win. Only this was Las Vegas, where the lottery of winning is not merely confined to roulette wheels and craps tables, but encompasses the boxing ring as well. The split decision victory gained by Morales was not larceny, as many in the Mandalay Bay Events Center deemed it to be, but neither was it legitimate.

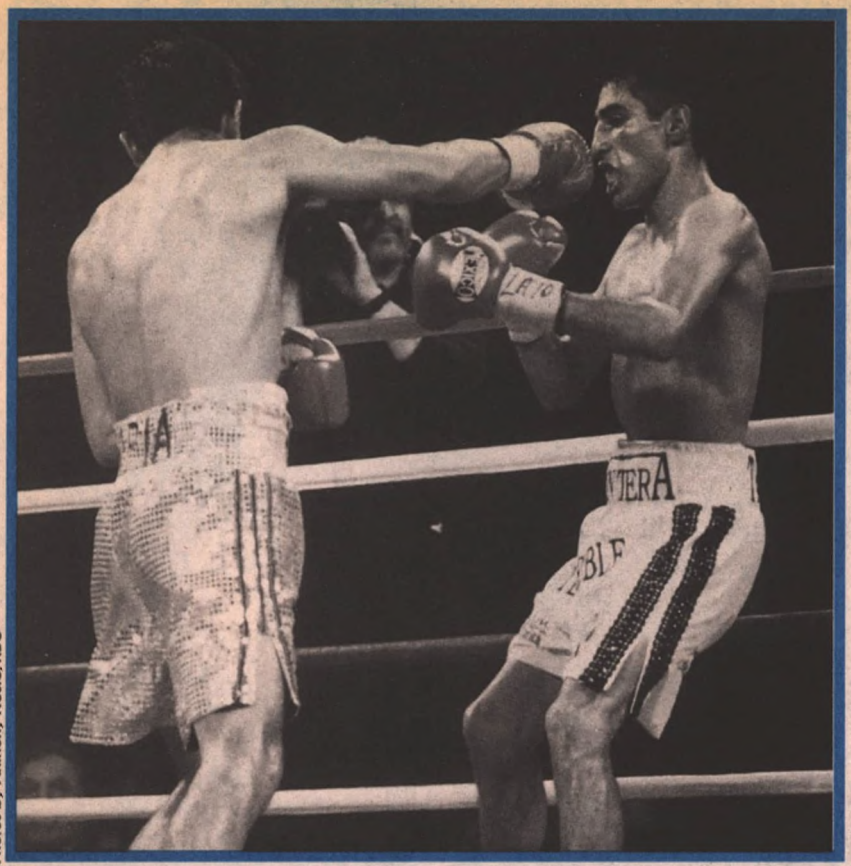
Barrera's angst was understandable. This collision of Mexican bull and matador saw the unbeaten matador repeatedly forced into looking for means of escape rather than evasion. The only way, he discovered, was toe-to-toe engagement, territory in which Barrera could feel confident. Only the remarkable resilience Morales summoned from previously unchartered regions deep within him prevented his impalement. But the ritual was never one-sided. Yielding, as was stunningly proved, has no meaning in either man's heart.

And so the bull was frequently repelled, pushed back with freakish strength, given the gaunt, skeletal frame Morales brought with him to the ring. His insistence that he would never compress his 5'8" body into 122 pounds again, announcing immediately that from now on he will campaign as a featherweight, was an inevitable concession to genetics. Whether his power was diminished by excruciating efforts to make the junior featherweight limit may be made clearer when his prodigious punches are unleashed at the higher weight. But apparent enough was that courage of the most rarefied order, in the face of a sustained violent onslaught, prevented his capitulation.

Whatever it is that flows through the blood of fighters of Mexican stock, the men who hail from the land of the Aztecs have consistently been boxing's most warrior-like. The raw violence of the ring seems to provide a natural means of expression to these machismo brethren. Jose "Toluco" Lopez brawled and drank in equal profusion, "Rockabye" Ruben Olivares partied and punched as if both these privileges would soon go out of fashion, Carlos Zarate, Pipino Cuevas, and Salvador Sanchez perpetuated the perception of a warrior race, and Julio Cesar Chavez scaled the summit, peerless from 130 to 140 pounds in the late-1980s and early-'90s. No baubles from the alphabet mob could obscure that what Morales and Barrera were really contesting was the right to replace Chavez on the pugilistic pedestal that to their countrymen is a beacon.

"This fight is personal," confirmed Ricardo Jimenez, a publicist for Top Rank, who promoted the February 19 bout. "Barrera was numero uno for a long time, but Morales has assumed his place. Erik is now getting a great deal of publicity in Mexico, which irks Barrera, who is perceived as an American fighter because most of his bouts have taken place in the United States. Everybody believes that Morales will win and, as a result, I've never seen Marco Antonio so intense and motivated.

"The titles at stake have nothing to do with this fight. Chavez was the guy for a long time, and now that title is vacant. If Morales wins, he's the guy. That's why I believe it's a more important fight for Morales. This fight is a steppingstone to a level Chavez elevated to new heights before vacating."



Photos by Anthony Neste/HBO

Morales repeatedly allowed himself to be backed into the ropes, and Barrera took full advantage, pasting his younger opponent with clean rights (above) and lefts (below).

Morales all the way," Barrera reflected a couple of days later. "Three hundred people who turned up at two in the morning when I returned to Mexico know who won the fight, and so does everybody who saw it."

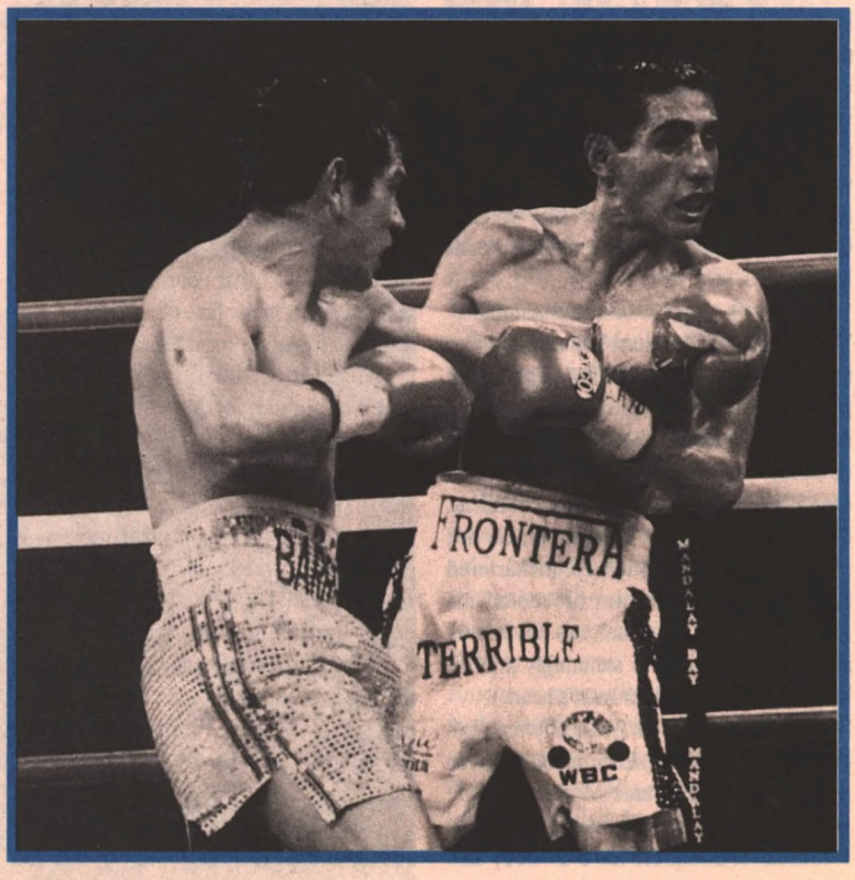
Quick, hard hooks were having a telling impact on Morales' head and body by the end of the opening round. A solid left hook to the body, the favorite blow of Mexican fighters, followed immediately by a right to WBC super bantamweight champion Morales' head in the second confirmed Barrera's early superiority. He appeared to be stronger than his foe, who was born on the first floor of a building in Tijuana that housed a boxing gym, but was betraying signs here that his technique is not innate. His balance frequently let him down, and his gauging of distance, too, as he struggled to establish room for the kind of withering shots that have advanced his career record to 36-0 (28).

Barrera, 49-3 (36), met Morales' patented jab in the third, but his defenses held up and his shots to the body retained an almost sickening effect even on those sitting safely at ringside. But Morales had at least gained a foothold going into the monumental fifth.

Barrera, Chavez' heir apparent before successive shocking defeats to Junior Jones (whom Morales decimated in four rounds in '98) in 1996 and '97, demonstrated emphatically its importance to him. A couple of days before the fight, the 26-year-old native of Mexico City proclaimed that fighters from Morales' hometown of Tijuana are chicken. They don't like to be hit. The enmity between them took root last year in a charity soccer match during which Barrera made a reckless challenge on his 23-year-old opponent. Play stopped and, although no blows were exchanged, they squared up and terms for future engagement were drawn. A sparring session, too, became a matter of considerable dispute when Morales claimed he floored Barrera five years ago, an allegation Barrera dismissed as a dream.

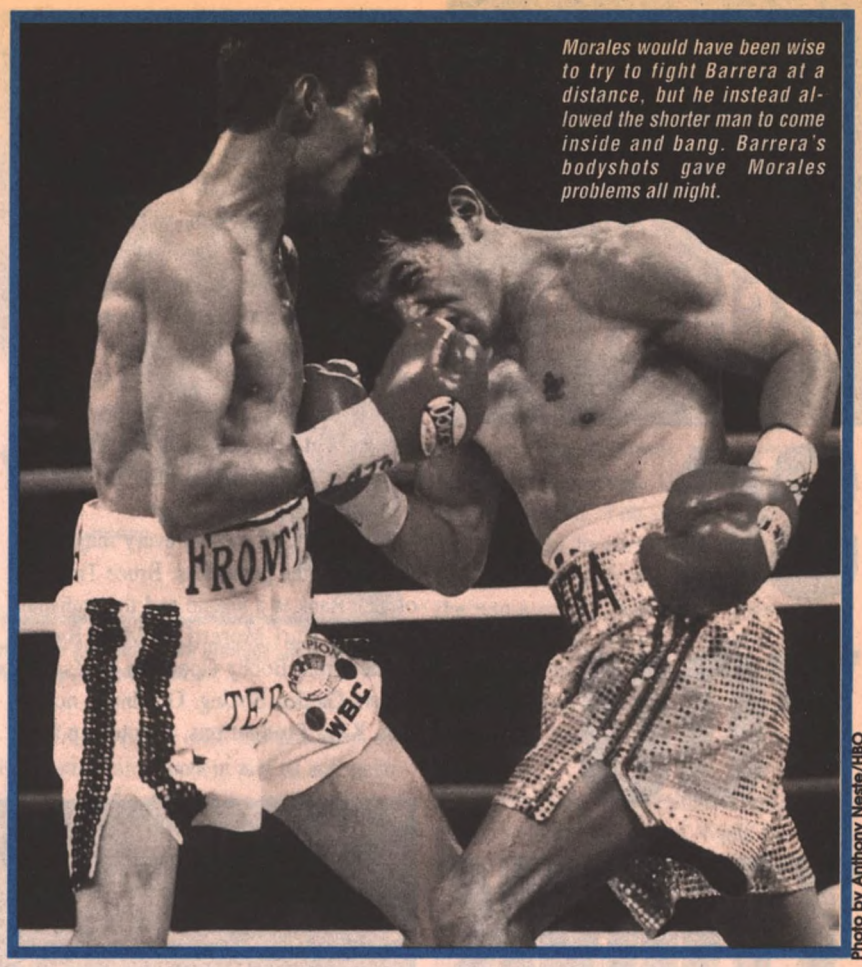
"What in fact happened was that four rounds was cut short to two when Morales said, 'No more,' after he took a number of my bodyshots," Barrera countered. In the real fight, he neglected the counters, seizing the initiative straight away.

"Look at the fight. I took the action to



If the test of a great fight is its fluctuating momentum, then greatness was bestowed on this one during these three eternal minutes. Initially it was a right by Barrera that propelled Morales against the ropes, where Barrera, holder of the second-rate junior featherweight belt, unloaded a powerful left hook and a battery of bludgeoning blows. But the Morales people had talked all along of the vulnerability Barrera had shown to the straight right of the classy American Jones, and suggested their man would exploit this. He did, explosively, halting the Barrera bull charge with a sizzling right hand that was subsidized with two more and a series of clubbing rights to Barrera's ear as the older man betrayed the first signs of wilting. It was an illusion. When Morales stopped firing, Barrera broke the cessation with hooks of savage ferocity, bloodying Morales' nose and igniting a baying, lustful crowd.

It was no wonder that both protagonists squeezed in a breather in the sixth, but Barrera regained some of his strength to take the seventh and even more resoundingly the eighth when Morales courageously attempted to disguise his fatigue, but was staggered by a number of measured blows, taking him to the brink of exhaustion. His reduced state was not helped by Barrera's sustained aggression in the ninth and 10th, but his utter refusal to seek the refuge of a short kneeling count was dumbfounding. There remained no respite through the penultimate and final rounds, but a rare error by Las Vegas referee Mitch Halpern, when he ruled a Morales slip with around 30 seconds remaining as a knockdown and issued a count, appeared to remove any doubt surrounding the verdict.



Morales would have been wise to try to fight Barrera at a distance, but he instead allowed the shorter man to come inside and bang. Barrera's bodyshots gave Morales problems all night.

Photo by Anthony Neste/HBO

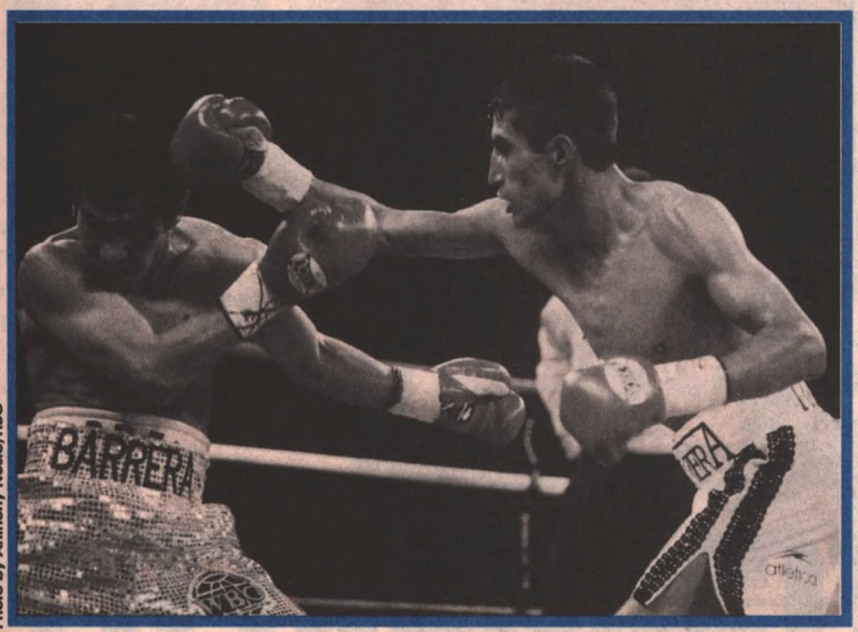


Photo by Anthony Neste/HBO

Though nearly everyone felt Barrera deserved to win, the fight was far from one-sided. Here, Morales turns aggressive and backs Barrera up with a lunging right hand.

"I was sure in my heart of hearts that I would get the decision. I clearly won the fight," Barrera insisted. "But what happened made me consider retirement. The result, when they announced it, was harder to take than anything Morales had thrown at me all night. I thought, *What must I do to win a fight in Vegas?* I had planned to attack and I did all the time, winning a minimum of seven, eight rounds. I studied his tapes and saw that he doesn't like to be in the position of having to fight back and his punches are always aimed downward. He's a very good boxer, a very good puncher, but he never hurt me.

"I stopped throwing punches in the fifth and 10th because my stomach was cramping up slightly. I ate a chocolate dessert after my meal before the fight, and I think it affected me a little. But I still won. It was terrible what the judges did. But I feel much better now. Everybody has told me I won, and the WBO have given me back my belt because they know the deal too."

The deal was that Dalby Shirley some-

(Continued on page 76)

A Behind-The-Scenes Exclusive

SO YOU THINK IT'S EASY BEING A MATCHMAKER?

By Eric Bottjer

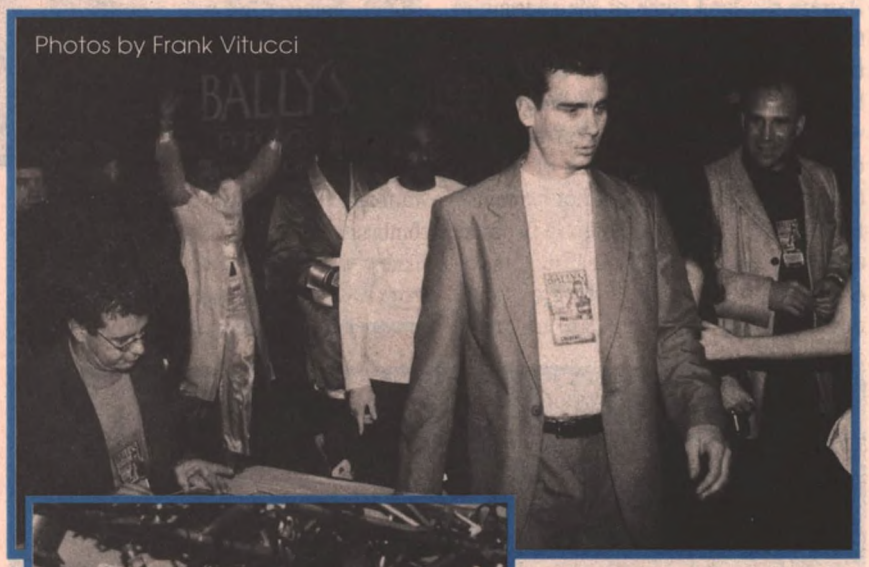
"You'll never make money writing about boxing."

These knowledgeable words were spoken to me 10 years ago by legendary matchmaker Johnny Bos. I learned the hard way that he was right.

So, armed with a journalism degree and a desire to learn all I could about boxing, I ended up a matchmaker. There's a long story behind it, but the *Cliff's Notes* version is this: Not many people want this job, and out of the few who do, most pack it in after losing sleep, hair, and money. The junkies remain.

Behind the scenes of every major promotion are the great ones: Bruce Trampler of Top Rank is a legend and the undisputed dean; Carl Moretti of Main Events learned from Bobby Goodman at Madison Square Garden Boxing; Goodman, now at Don King Productions, is tutoring John Beninati, while King's chief matchmaker, 80-year-old Peyton Sher, is so well thought of by King's staff, his unofficial title there is "Matchmaker For Life"; Tom Brown of America Presents amazed me once by filling three fights within 24 hours of the show; Bill Benton put dollar shows together for Cedric Kushner on dime budgets. For me to call myself a peer would insult these guys, but they give me a standard to shoot for.

I read and hear about the "good old days" in boxing, how fighters, trainers, managers, and, yes, matchmakers, were much better than today's versions. I do agree those days must have been good, especially for matchmakers—when available fighters in each state numbered in the hundreds, not dozens; when fighters used to show up at weigh-ins looking for work, not disappearing from weigh-ins wordlessly with some mysterious ailment; when fighters fought weekly, not bi-monthly;



Matchmaker Bottjer leads one of the contestants to the ring for his bout on the February 18 ESPN2 Friday Night Fights card in Atlantic City. A matchmaker's life is filled with hassles, but pays better than boxing writing, Bottjer's original calling.

Junior featherweight Glenn Ghany gets his blood pressure checked at the prefight physical while several other fighters, including headliner Angel Manfredy (far left), look on.

when the only medical test was fogging a mirror; when Fight Fax, the New Jersey record-keeping service, was a just gleam in Ralph Citro's eye; when fighting under assumed names was routine, not criminal.

In the 2½ years I've made matches for Kushner, the routine is this—fighters pull out, normally within 48 hours of the show (funny how all car wrecks, ankle sprains, sore hands, court dates, and the like occur within 48 hours of the show). Trainers always want tuneups, as in, "Get us one easy fight and we'll fight anyone the next time." Managers always want more money.

The first show I ever did for CKP prepared me for subsequent disasters. We were courting heavyweight Phil Jackson, and sold a show to the Claridge Casino in Atlantic City based on his name. After arguing over a series of proposed foes, Jackson settled on Oleg Maskaev. The night before he was supposed to fly in from Miami, Jackson called me at home. Collect, of course. It was 12:20 a.m., and I started sweating. Nobody calls at 12:20 in the morning with good news. But Jackson was pleasant, and after some inane smalltalk, I asked if everything was fine.

"Oh, everything is great," he replied.

"Okay, I'll see you tomorrow," I said, relieved.

"Well, maybe I'll see you next month."

"Pardon me? Phil, your flight leaves tomorrow morning."

"Well, I figure with the problems we had finding an opponent and us still negotiating a contract [we were in the midst of offering Jackson a promotional contract], that it would be better if I waited until next month to fight. You understand, don't you?"

I understood, all right. I understood I wanted Phil Jackson to spontaneously combust. Panic-stricken, I called everyone I knew who would be up late and went to work. Who the hell wanted to fight Maskaev—a double-tough guy and a stupid choice by Jackson—on two days notice? The answer to that question was found playing basketball in Detroit the next day by booking agent Lindy Lindell. Booker Word checked the lint in his pockets and accepted $5,000 to fly in that day. He even gave Maskaev a credible fight before he gassed out in the fourth.

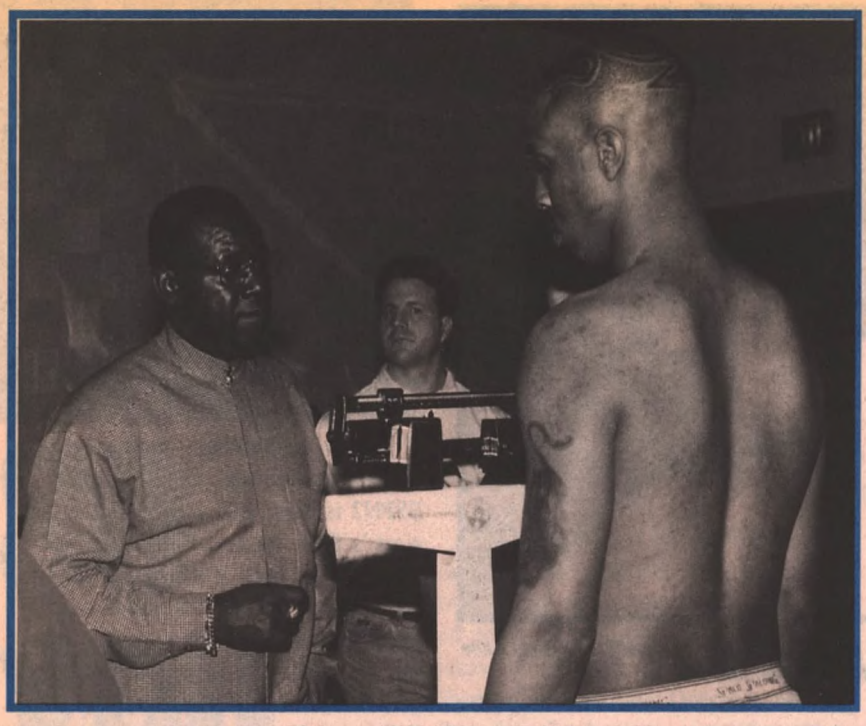
Between that first show and the latest—an ESPN2 date featuring Angel Manfredy in Atlantic City—there have been dozens of pullouts and fallouts. You get used to it.

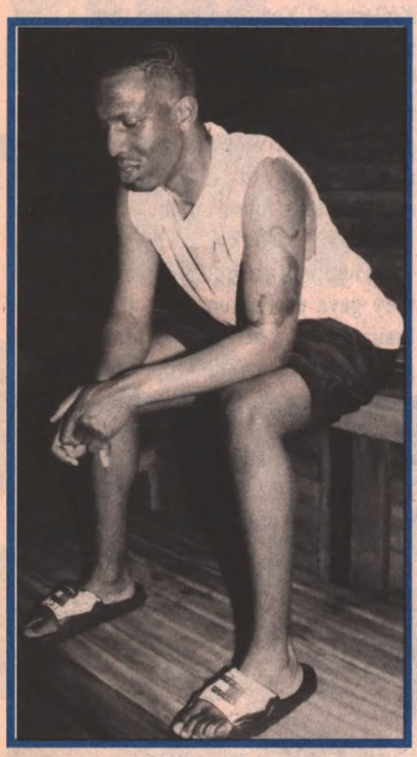
I knew the Manfredy show would be tougher than normal. Quality control at ESPN2 is high. You can't fool the network's fight buyers, Bob Yalen and J Russell Peltz, both of whom can tell you the name of the WBC's number-seven rated flyweight, his wife's maiden name, and where they ate their last meal. Plus, who wants to be badmouthed by Max Kellerman? You have to give them a good show.

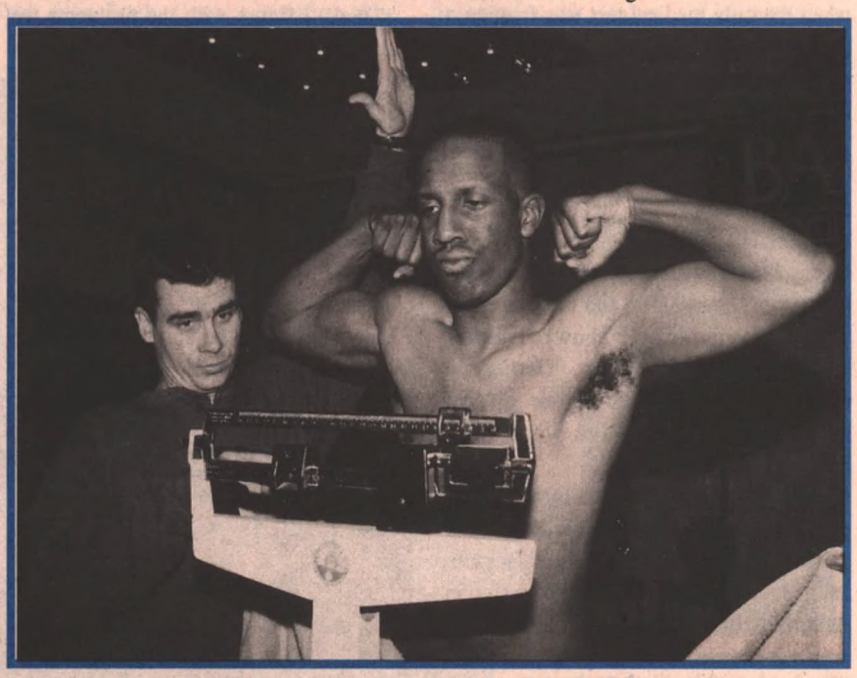
There's steep competition among promoters to grab ESPN dates. While the budgets are relatively small ($65,000 per show), the network offers great exposure sorely lacking following the death of boxing at USA network.

When we offered ESPN Manfredy, they gave us February 18. It was a no-brainer for the network, as Manfredy has great name recognition, does tremendous

J Russell Peltz, who buys the fights for ESPN2, goes over the lineup with Bottjer, as TV producer Frank Belmont looks on. Peltz forced Bottjer to look hard for a credible opponent for Manfredy after the matchmaker's first choice, Lionel Butler, was nixed by the veteran Philadelphia promoter.







As commissioner Larry Hazzard looks on, junior middleweight Robert Linton fails to make weight (top). Linton had to head for the sauna (left), where he sweated off a pound and, with Bottjer's approval (above), made the weight. He went on to win a four-round decision.

TV ratings, and is never in a dull fight.

Now come the problems, inherited by the matchmaker. Whom does Manfredy fight? The network wants a competitive fight, while the promoter doesn't want to risk a meal ticket on a show where he makes virtually no money.

I thought I had the prefect solution, a Virginia lightweight named Lionel Butler, with a 21-4 record and nine wins in a row. "Forget it," said Peltz, in a caustic message on my answering machine, which I replayed on speakerphone to amused co-workers. "Lionel Butler is not fighting Angel Manfredy on ESPN." Every word was drawn out to emphasize that it was not up for further discussion. Four years prior, Peltz had matched Butler with John Brown in Atlantic City. Brown blew out Butler in three, and for Peltz, that memory lingered.

A few days later, Peltz called and offered undefeated Philadelphian Calvin Davis. "Forget it," I replied. "He'll stink the joint out." I didn't fear Manfredy would lose. Davis had never fought on TV and had never met someone of Manfredy's caliber. But Davis is lefthanded and a runner. A "stinking southpaw" is the common description of such a fighter. Not good TV. I also remembered dealing with Davis' manager a few years back after offering another fighter a four-round fight in Atlantic City for $750. "The going rate is $1,500 in Atlantic City," he sniffed. "Not in Atlantic City, New Jersey," I replied. I don't go out of my way to have our company do business with unreasonable managers.

In the meantime, while solving the Manfredy riddle, the undercard was made. The co-feature was easily set, a 10-round fight between two unbeaten heavyweights, Robert Davis of Akron, Ohio, and Charles Shufford of Las Vegas.

Davis was a CKP fighter from the start, and we were surprised he had made it through 19 fights unbeaten. In his first six matches, Davis was knocked down in four of them. The obvious early conclusion was Davis had no chin, little defense, and would get drilled by the first good fighter he faced.

Davis was also easily misjudged as a person. He said little to anyone. One time, after a missed airport pickup in

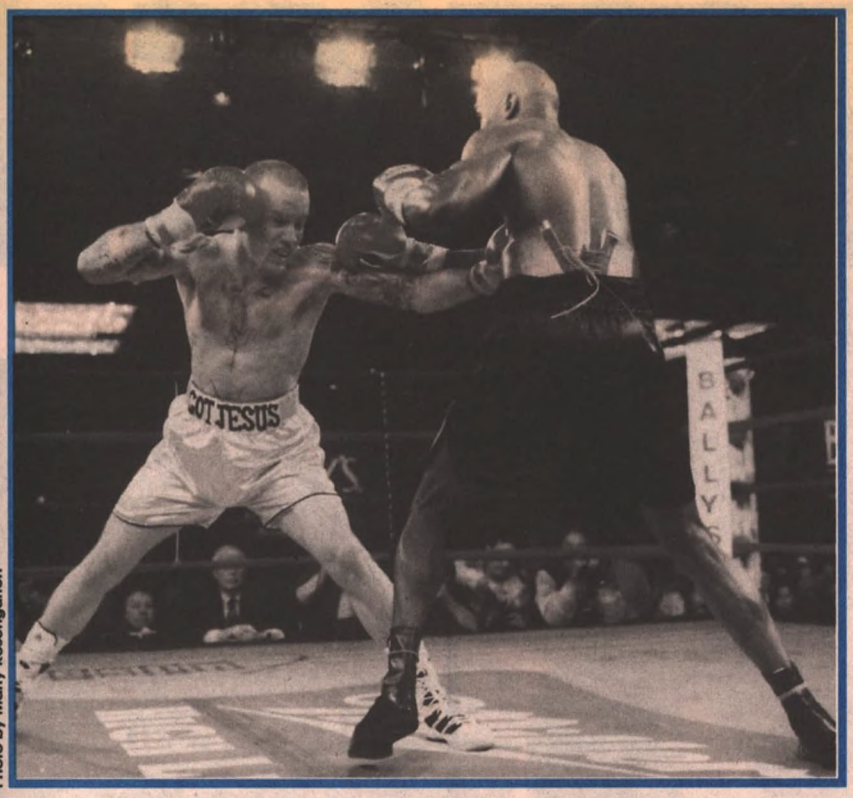


Photo by Marty Rosengarten

Manfredy drives a hard left into Sean Fletcher's midsection. After some anxious moments early, the comebacking Manfredy knocked Fletcher silly in the fourth with a series of shots along the ropes.

Philadelphia, a girlfriend of mine picked up Davis and trainer Sonny Oliver and drove them to Atlantic City, about a one-hour trip. "Don't you ever make me do that again," she warned me afterward. "That big guy did not say one word the whole trip. He's spooky."

Actually Davis turned out to be a pleasant fellow, smiling easily amongst people he knows. And he's developed into a good fighter. In his last 12 fights, the only knockdowns happened when Davis thumped his foes.

We acquired Shufford when he was 9-0. An accomplished amateur, Shufford was snapped up by promoter Frank Warren and manager Sterling McPherson. Despite his wins, Shufford was so unimpressive that the duo dropped him. CKP signed him, on the premise that any undefeated heavyweight has value, coupled with the fact that we promote two all-heavyweight shows a month and allot eight 10-round spots per month. We had plenty of work for fellows like Shufford.

Despite his image as an egotistical punk, Manfredy is actually one of boxing's genuine nice guys, and he generously gave $5,000 of his $40,000 purse to ailing Hall of Famer Wilfred Benitez. Manfredy was even decked out in a Benitez hat and T-shirt.

When I approached both sides about the fight, neither hesitated. The Davis camp saw Shufford as a reluctant, non-puncher who would fold under pressure. Shufford saw Davis as a novice who could be hit and had never boxed more than six rounds.

Five more fights were needed to round out the show. Manfredy asked for a slot for bantamweight Luis Perez. Another easy fight to make, as New York boxing man Joe Guzman was shopping Glen Ghany, and grabbed the chance. A risk for both, as both were undefeated.

Peltz mentioned that a Camden, New Jersey, junior welterweight named Miguel Figueroa brought fans to Atlantic City. Shortly after, while attending a pair of shows there, I found a Washington, D.C., fighter that matched up perfectly with Figueroa. "And," said D.C. manager Cleveland Burgess, "I got a backup in case something happens." Two matches made, three to go, not including the Manfredy case.

Brian McDaniel, a polite, persistent lawyer from the D.C. area, called constantly about his fighters, 290-pound Imani Lee, winner in five of six, and junior middleweight Robert Linton, undefeated in three. I had seen Lee one year prior, and he was big, green, and in no hurry to fight anyone with a pulse. But McDaniel wanted to test Lee, and Al Lassiter, a 300-pound 3-0 bumpkin from Virginia, was a perfect foil.

As for Linton, Phil Thrasher, 2-1, of Brick, New Jersey, was an hour away, and manager Keith Painter worked the phones with polite persistence to get his man work. Easy fights to make.

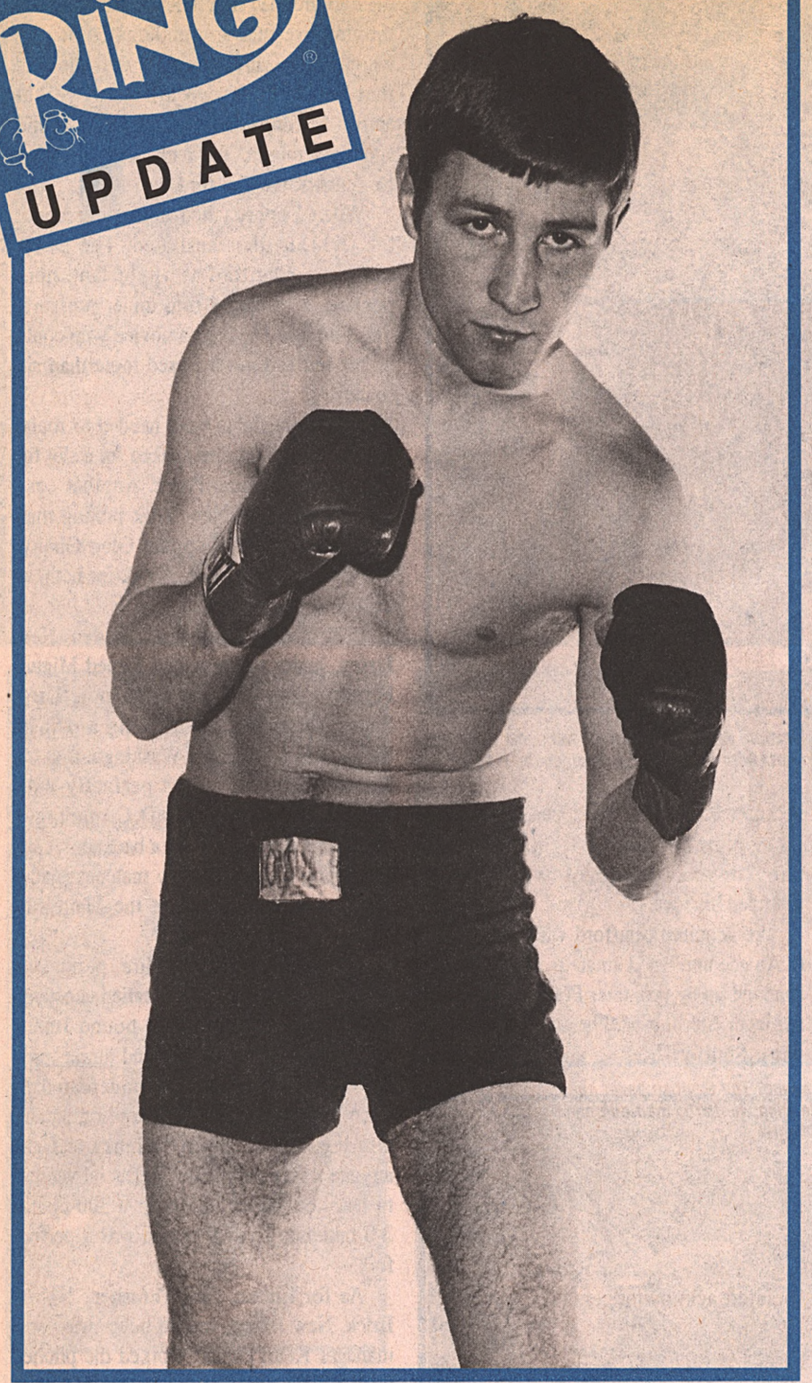
To fill out the card, I searched in vain for someone to fight middleweight puncher Tokunbo Olajide.

Meanwhile, Manfredy's foe surfaced in the form of a shaven-skulled former Navy champion. Sean Fletcher had once challenged Manfredy at a Chicago show and genuinely wanted the fight. Manfredy,

(Continued on page 76)

The RING UPDATE

KEN BUCHANAN



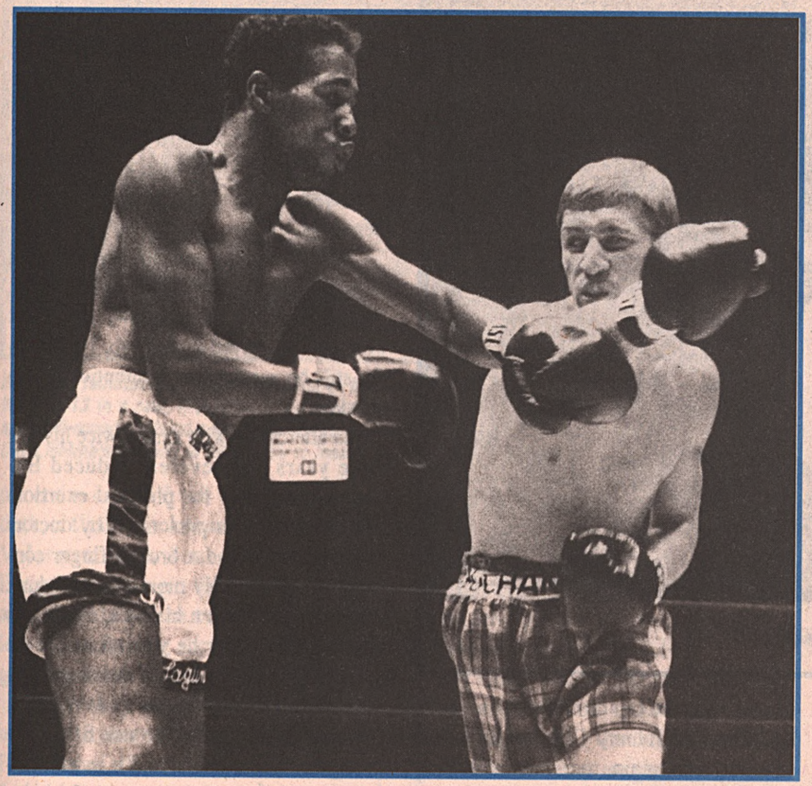
"Getting Elected To The Hall Of Fame Is Like Receiving An Oscar For A Film You Made 20-Odd Years Ago"

Photo by Brian Doogan

Buchanan as he appeared in his fighting prime (top left) and as he looks today (above). The former lightweight champion will be inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame this June.

By Brian Doogan

Ken Buchanan stood up from the desk where he had tapped out 300-odd words on his trusty Smith Corona typewriter, his hands appreciably less nifty on the keyboard than when he put them to work against the likes of Ismael Laguna, Carlos Ortiz, and Roberto Duran in his accomplished fighting prime. These same hands, which evoked comparisons with the peerless Sugar Ray Robinson when utilized with unnerving precision and potency in front of the hardened New York fight fraternity, were now documenting memories from some of those wars. But a sudden, unexpected buzz from the phone interrupted this latter-day Xenophon, the Greek soldier-turned-writer and pupil of Socrates, and drew his mind back from days he shared with Muhammad Ali at Madison Square Garden to the present: 11:30 on a typically bitter January night in Cumbernawld, an overflow area some 10 miles from the center of industrial Glasgow in the west of Scotland.



Buchanan en route to a repeat win over Ismael Laguna. The Scottish boxer had originally won the 135-pound title from Laguna in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in 1970, then outpointed him again in a rematch at Madison Square Garden the following year.

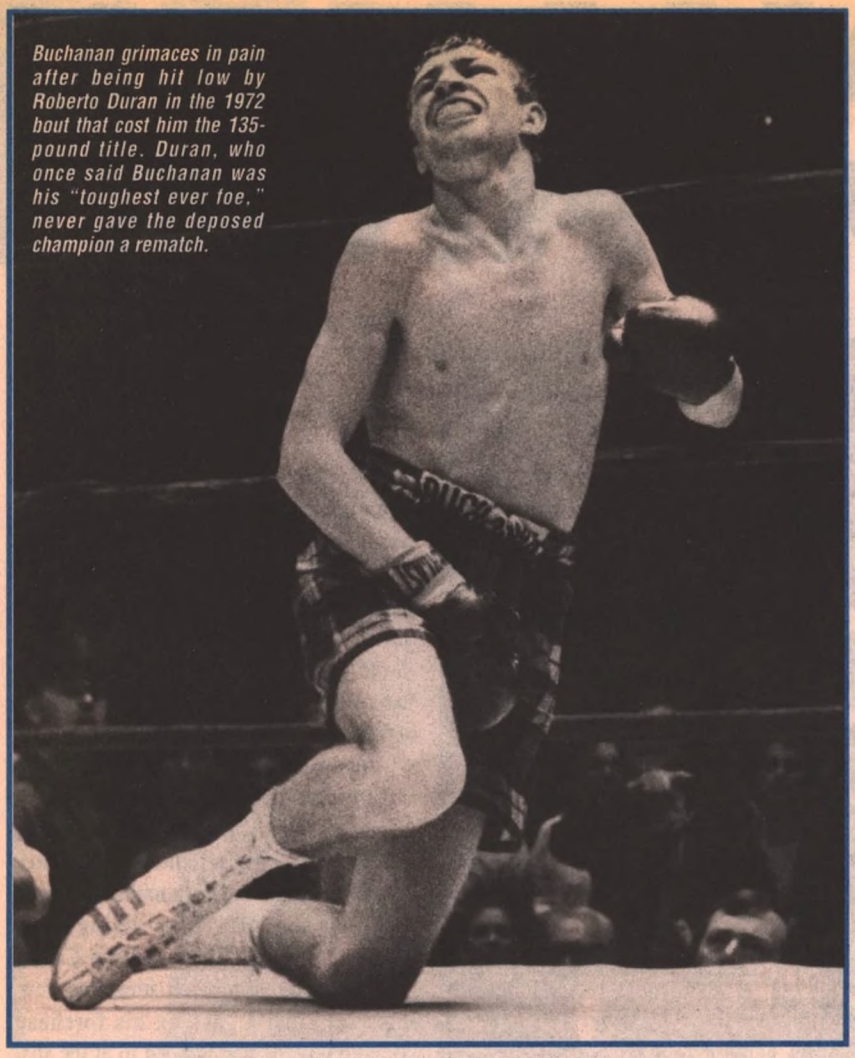
The brief transatlantic conversation he had with Ed Brophy, director of the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York, had an immediate implosive, then cathartic effect. "Kenny," Brophy addressed him, "I'm delighted to inform you that our international panel has elected you to the Hall of Fame. Congratulations." For a moment the breath was taken from the former world lightweight champion, a sensation he rarely experienced through 18 years and 70 bouts in rings he illuminated as no Scotsman had done since the flyweight phenom, Benny Lynch. But once he had regained his composure, Buchanan felt overwhelmed by the belated acknowledgement of his worth that, to a man who harbored deep resentments from a childhood of persecution by his peers, seemed denied him for longer than he cared to remember.

"It was like something caught me in my throat, and Ed Brophy had to ask in all genuineness, 'Kenny, are you still there?' 'Aye,' I eventually managed to reply," Buchanan recalled in a lilting, rhythmic accent reminiscent of the Glaswegian comedian, Billy Connolly, with whom he shares a penetrating wit. "Being inducted to the Hall of Fame is a different type of feeling to winning the world championship. That feeling is incredible after you've trained for it and worked hard and sacrificed for weeks, months, years of your life. But to be the first living British fighter to be inducted is fabulous, the icing on the cake.

"You know, 30 years after winning the world title and nearly 20 years after retirement, you begin to think that people forget. So to get an accolade like this is that wee bit special. It's like receiving an Oscar for a film you made 20-odd years ago."

Any film of Buchanan's life would draw as much inspiration from Charlie Chaplin as it might from Charles Bronson. As he says himself, he is frequently involved in incidents remarkable largely for their stupidity. Like diving into a swimming pool recently in Gran Canaria and emerging with blood streaming down his face from a gash on his forehead. Unwittingly, he had jumped in at the shallow end and cracked his head on the bottom.

Buchanan took dancing lessons for two months in preparation for his waltz with England's Princess Anne in 1971, the year he was selected as British Sportsman of the Year. Princess Anne, an expert equestrian, was British Sportswoman of the Year.



Buchanan grimaces in pain after being hit low by Roberto Duran in the 1972 bout that cost him the 135-pound title. Duran, who once said Buchanan was his "toughest ever foe," never gave the deposed champion a rematch.

And there was the time he was leaving the cinema and saw that the bus home was already approaching, ran toward the bus shelter near the entrance to a tunnel, and—just as the bus drew up—disappeared from sight. The bemused driver looked into his far wing mirror and was not sure whether to laugh or feel sorry for his prospective passenger emerging sheepishly from a gaping hole by the side of the road.

The comedy is sustained in any conversation with Buchanan, still down near his fighting weight of 135 pounds and recognizable under black, thick-rimmed spectacles as the lean, magnificently balanced practitioner who relieved Puerto Rican star Laguna of the WBA lightweight laurels in the marrow-sapping, 120-degree afternoon heat of San Juan in September 1970.

Boxing economics dictated that his championship fighting was done predominantly on foreign soil. But retirement from the ring in 1983, having brought the curtain down ignominiously by contesting an illegal fight in London that he won by knocking out Johnny Claydon in seven, saw Buchanan return to his native land to resume work as a joiner after an initially successful venture with a hotel in Edinburgh failed.

"I remember I was on a job once, a big building in Glasgow, and there were six of us, all joiners, working there, doing the ceilings and everything," he recalled. "I joined the job on the Monday, and on the Tuesday afternoon we were sitting there having our lunch when these two guys walked in with shirts and ties on. The guys I was working with didn't know who I was. My hair was longer, I was wearing dark glasses, and I had about three days growth on my face. They knew me as Ken and that was it.

"One of the guys who walked in had a book in his hand and shouted over, 'Ken, any chance of your autograph?' I said, 'Aye, no problem.' So the other guys are looking at one another as I'm signing this book, thinking, *What in the hell is going on here?* So when the two fellas leave, one of the guys, a little gingerly, turned to me and said, 'Ken, I really don't know who you are, but you must be some bloody joiner.'

"I was never a great joiner, but I liked working with wood. And I'll tell you this, I must have served the longest apprenticeship in the history of carpentry. I left school around 1960 and started what was supposed to be a five-year apprenticeship. But about 1968, when I was British champion, ranked number two in Europe and six in the world, I was still an apprentice. Young laddies were becoming qualified joiners, and me five or six years older than them.

"I'd keep being told by my foreman, 'Yeah, Kenny, nine months to go,' then, 'Just another four months now,' and it just went on. If I stayed in that job, I'd probably still be serving my apprenticeship to this day."

An altercation with a man twice his size three years ago severely reduced Buchanan's capacity for physical exertion. Painkillers he was prescribed by doctors for broken ribs and a broken finger concealed a considerably more serious injury. Buchanan had broken his back, but it was nine months—after he was taken off the painkilling tablets—before this was diagnosed. He has been unable to work since. Generally, he spurns the use of a cane through embarrassment, and it is with natural reluctance that he accepts his fate.

"There are a lot of things I wish I could do that I can't, like flying down the chutes into the swimming pool—though that probably saves me from ripping the arse out of my pants," he said. "But I can't really do much about it."

Most of the demons that infiltrated his driven nature, resulting in a fiercely independent, sometimes paranoid personality, have been conquered since his retirement. A hard edge remains, and he is brusquely dismissive of British boxing's current leading light, Naseem Hamed.

"I read in the paper recently that he must be the best of the best if he beats this Mexican, Erik Morales. Who the hell is he kidding?" Buchanan demanded. "I started boxing in 1953, retired in '83, and that's 30 years, and Naseem has been on his arse more times in one fight than I was during

Buchanan remained a popular attraction on both sides of the Atlantic after losing to Duran. He won his next 13 in a row, including a two-round knockout of Chang-Kil Lee (above) in New York City and a 10-round decision over Hector Matta (below) in London. Buchanan finally got a crack at WBC titlist Ishimatsu Suzuki in 1975, only to lose a 15-round decision in Tokyo.

my entire career. I was only once on the deck, a flash knockdown against Miguel Velasquez in a bout for the vacant European lightweight title, and I was up in a flash, didn't even take a count. So it leaves me smiling the way they talk of greatness today."

When they inevitably bring up the name of Roberto Duran, the possessed Panamanian who clubbed and butted and fouled his way to a controversial victory over the tartan-clad Scot in Madison Square Garden in 1972 to claim the lightweight crown, a barely perceptible grimace crosses Buchanan's face. It is partly emotional, partly physical. The memory of the low blows and particularly the final one that ought to have resulted in Duran's disqualification rather than Buchanan being beaten is reinforced by an occasional acute pain in his lower regions. For two weeks after their spiteful confrontation, he urinated blood, the metal in his protector having penetrated one of his testicles and burst a vein.

"It was the only place he hurt me—underneath," Buchanan insisted. "He never really hit me anywhere else. I have as many marks on my face now as when I came out of the ring with Duran. He never gave me a rematch, and it still rankles because I believe I could have been champion for a few more years and then retired. I've never seen him or spoken to him since that night. But I gave him a shot, and he should have given me a shot. I can guess, and so can others, why he didn't."

The simple reason was once conveyed to the dean of British sportswriters, Hugh McIlvanney, by the man himself. "Buchanan was my toughest ever foe," Duran growled, testimony enough to validate the 54-year-old's entry this summer to the Hall.

As it is for all the old fighters who congregate in Canastota in mid-June, Buchanan is eagerly anticipating the opportunity to renew old acquaintances with the likes of Marvelous Marvin Hagler, Smokin' Joe Frazier, Carlos Ortiz, and perhaps Muhammad Ali, with whom he shared a dressing room in the Garden the night The Greatest battled torridly with Oscar Bonavena.

"They hadn't assigned Ali a dressing room—as he said, he didn't even have a pot to pee in—so I happily invited him into mine," smiled Buchanan.

He has sent a letter to the WBA and hopes finally to receive his world title belt (he somehow never received one from the organization after dethroning Laguna) when the greatest of honors is bestowed upon him on June 11 in that quaint corner of upstate New York. And he may reminisce about another such gathering back in 1971 when he and Princess Anne, Queen Elizabeth's daughter, were honored as British Sportsman and Sportswoman of the Year.

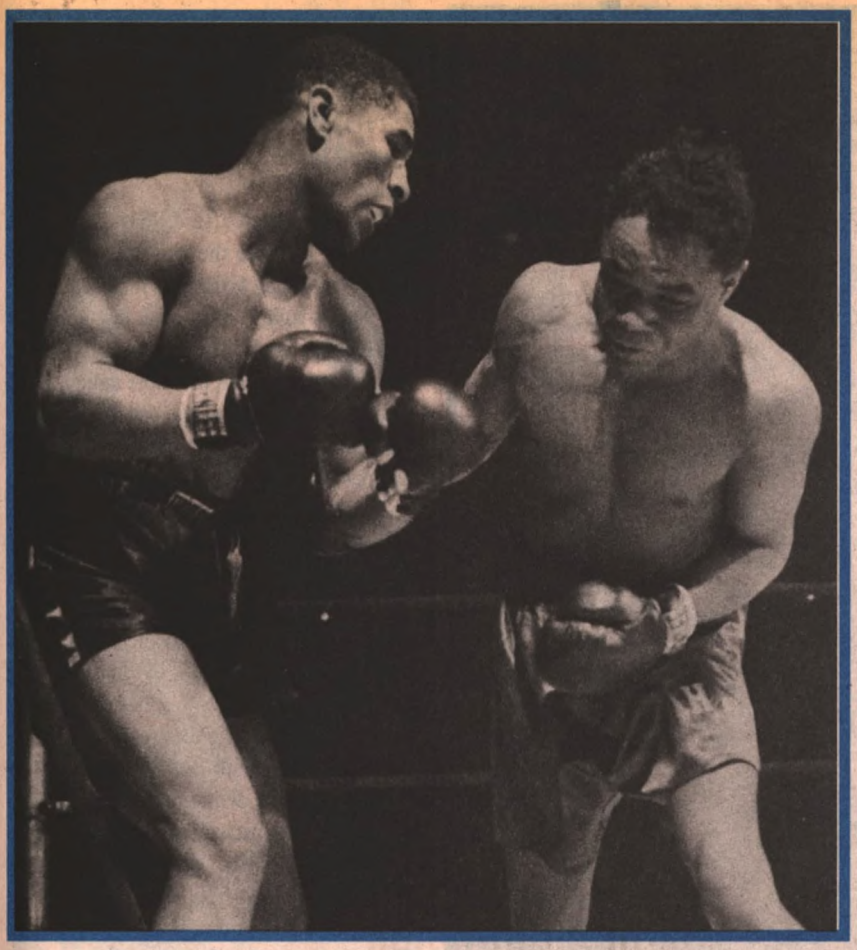
"Anyone who was anybody in British sport at the time was there that night," Buchanan related. "I had to lead off the dance with Princess Anne. I remember that I went to dancing lessons for two months to get it right, but when I got out on the

(Continued on page 77)

BEAU JACK

He Shined Before, During, And After His Career

There have been far more great fighters than great boxing writers, but among the handful of those who measure up to the most exacting of literary standards is W.C. Heinz. Heinz, however, retired some time ago, so it was something of a surprise when he telephoned THE RING *and offered to contribute the following tribute to Beau Jack. Unlike everybody else who currently writes for the magazine, Heinz covered Jack's career and knew him personally. But even if that were not true, his piece would have been most welcome. After all, how often does an opportunity come along to have one all-time great write about another?*



In a 1943 battle of future Hall of Famers, Jack won a 10-round decision over Henry Armstrong (right) at Madison Square Garden. Before his career was over, Jack fought 21 main events at the Garden, an all-time record that will probably never be broken.

By W.C. Heinz

He was the primitive in a primitive profession, and he started in the battle royals in Augusta, Georgia. The whites would blindfold a half a dozen blacks in a ring and sound the bell, and the survivor was the winner. It came in after bearbaiting went out, and it was the start of the boxing career of Beau Jack.

"When the bell rings," Beau said, when I asked him to describe it, "you walk into a shot and you don't know where you are. I stay in my corner, and when I feel the wind, I know to get goin'. One time it was only my brother and me left, and I knocked him out. Yes, sir."

"And where were the fights held?" I asked him.

"In Augusta, in an auditorium like a car place, but the cars are gone, and the guy put in a ring, and it was a nice place."

He had the primitive's basic trust in the niceness and goodness of everything. To Beau Jack, born Sidney Walker in Augusta in 1921, and who would twice win the New York State version of the lightweight championship of the world, everybody was his friend.

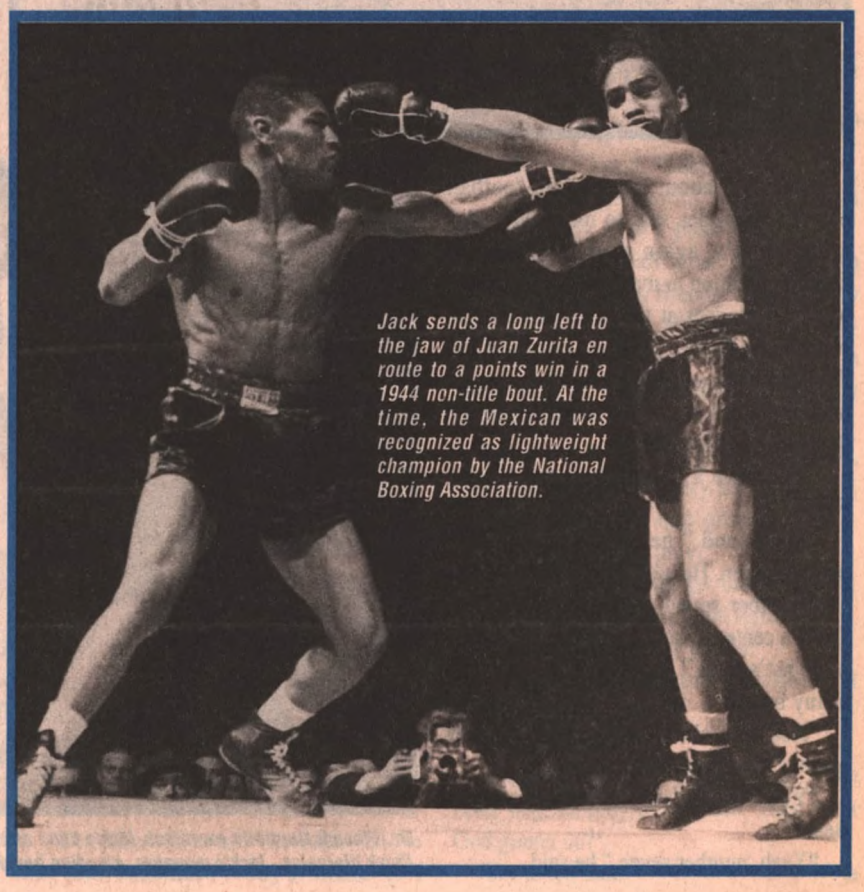
"Put your name on a piece of paper," Chick Wergeles said to me the first time I met Beau. "Then give it to Beau."

This was in one of the dressing rooms in Stillman's Gym, and Chick was managing him. Beau had just finished his workout and he was still sitting on a stool, cooling out. With those high cheekbones in that broad face and those deep, dark eyes and that coloration, he had the appearance of an Indian.

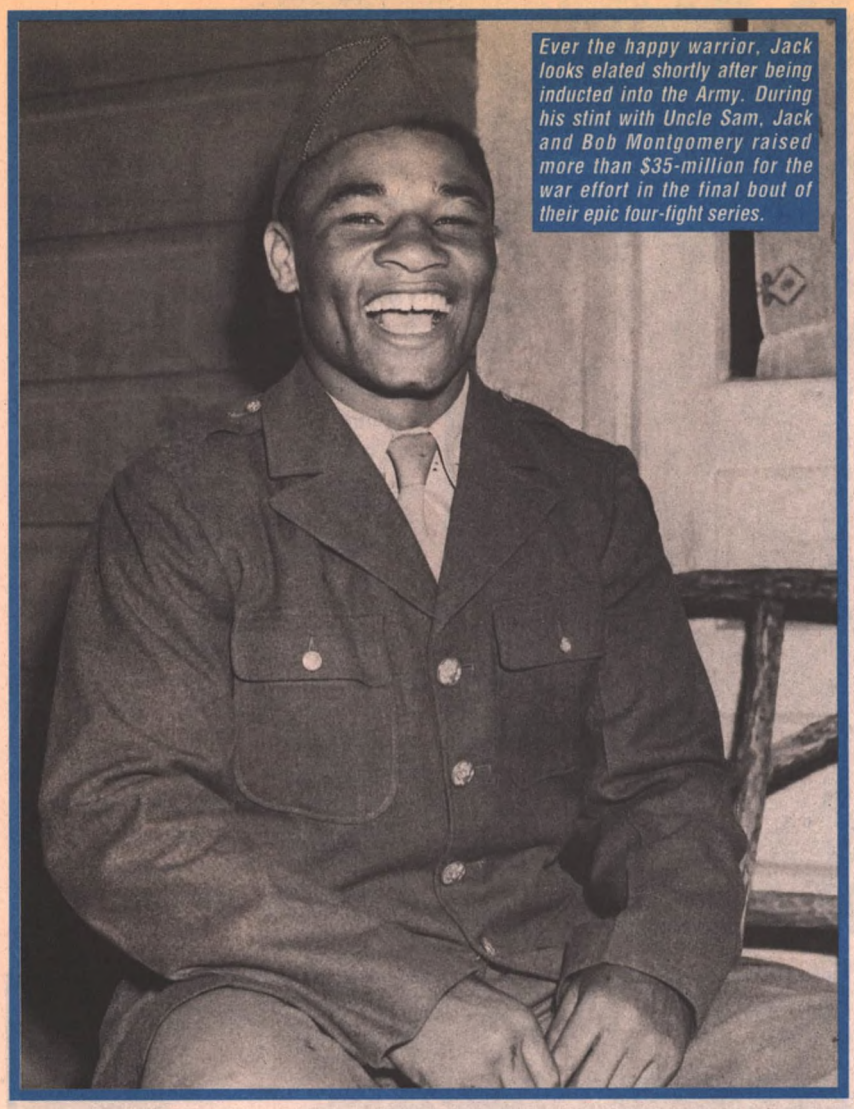
"But why should I give my name to Beau?" I said, falling right into the common habit, I realized later, of talking around Beau the way you talk around a small child.

"He's learnin' to read," Chick said. "He wants to take your name home and study it. He does that with all the writers, so when he sees them, he'll know their names."

"Yeah," Beau said, smiling. "They all my friends."



Jack sends a long left to the jaw of Juan Zurita en route to a points win in a 1944 non-title bout. At the time, the Mexican was recognized as lightweight champion by the National Boxing Association.



Ever the happy warrior, Jack looks elated shortly after being inducted into the Army. During his stint with Uncle Sam, Jack and Bob Montgomery raised more than $35-million for the war effort in the final bout of their epic four-fight series.

"That's Phil Watson," I said.

"Yeah," Beau said, smiling again. "He fast, and he my friend, too."

"Has he met Mel Hein and Phil Watson?" I said to Wergeles, again talking around Beau.

"No," Wergeles said. "He never met them, but he likes the way they play. He thinks everybody he likes is his friend."

"That's right," Beau said, laughing and nodding his head. "They all my friends."

He seemed to me the most amiable and happiest of human beings, one who in boxing found joy in all the training, the companionship, and even in the conflict itself, even when he lost. So filled was his life with those he felt were his friends that it was hard to conceive that he could have an enemy, and yet in and out of the fight game, they stripped him of his earnings from his 112 fights, 21 of them Garden main events.

Those Garden fights drew $1,578,000 at the gate, and with Bob Montgomery on August 4, 1944, when admission was by purchase of United States War Bonds, $35,864,000 worth were sold. Then, five years after his last fight, and 15 years after Bobby Jones, Jimmy Demaret, Grantland Rice, and enough other big names to float a bond issue sponsored his trip north to box, he was back shining shoes, this time at the Fontainbleau in Miami Beach.

Twenty-two years later, I found him

"Ask him about his favorite football player," Wergeles said to me another day at Stillman's, again as if Beau were a child. In addition to managing Beau, Chick was an attendant at the press box for the New York Giants football games at the Polo Grounds and the New York Ranger hockey games at the old Garden, and he took Beau to both places.

"You have a favorite football player, Beau?"

"My friend," he said, smiling. "He number seven. He's a tackle, I think."

"Number seven is Mel Hein," I said. "He's a center, Beau."

"That's right," Beau said. "He fast, and he my friend."

"Ask him about his favorite hockey player," Wergeles said.

"You have a favorite hockey player, Beau?"

"Yeah, number seven," he said.

Dr. Vincent Nardiello examines Jack's knee after he reinjured it fighting Tony Janiro in '47. That's Chick Wergeles, Jack's manager, standing beside the doctor, next to the fighter's elbow.

When his fighting days were over, Jack returned to shining shoes at the Augusta National Country Club, the same job he held before turning pro. Despite this unfortunate turn of events, Jack remained upbeat until his death in February 2000.

still there. He was working more than 100 hours a week, in the barber shop by day and up in one of the men's rooms at night, still talking about his friends—now Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr., and others who played there.

"Beau," I said, "how are you doing?"

He was heavier now, but the weight well distributed, the tight curls of the hair gray now. He had on neat gray slacks and an immaculate white T-shirt, with the logo of Don King, the boxing promoter, on it, and some 30 years had passed since I had printed my name on that piece of paper so that he could study it.

"Fine," he said. "Just fine."

"You earned a lot of money as a fighter, Beau," I said. "Do you know where it went?"

"No, sir," he said. "I don't know and I don't care. The members of the Augusta Golf Club gave me enough to get started, and I enjoyed it and I thankful. I'd never got out of Augusta but for Bobby Jones, may he rest in peace, and them, and they give me the money."

"I never knew anyone else," I said, "who seemed to enjoy boxing as much as you did."

"That's right," he said, smiling. "I liked that."

"You'd be the first one into Stillman's and the last to leave. As long as there was sparring going on, you'd be there behind the ring watching."

"You remember that?" he said.

"Yes, I do."

"I watched them all," he said. "I love that, and sometimes a boy I lookin' at I was gonna meet him, and I know exactly what he's doin'. In my lifetime, though, I never want to hurt anybody, just that it be a good fight."

"I know," I said. "You used to ask me if it had been a good fight, and if the crowd liked it."

"You remember that too?" he said.

I remember it all. While he had been training in Chicago to fight Willie Joyce, his left knee had given way under him. Four months later, after an operation, he was back in Stillman's, getting ready to fight Tony Janiro.

"That doctor that fix that knee," he said, and he nodded toward Wergeles, "ain't no bigger than him, and he a great man. He my friend."

In the fourth round, though, the knee gave out again, and he fell to the canvas. He managed to rise and he tried to go on, but they had to stop it. After a second operation, he fought for five more years, and I remember his last fight at the Garden, when Tuzo Portugueze licked him, and I remember him in the dressing room later.

"I'm sorry, Beau," I said.

He was sitting on a stool, his white terrycloth robe over him, the sweat still on him.

"Were it a good fight?" he said.

"Yes, it was a good fight," I said, and it had been.

"Did the people like it?" he said.

"Oh, yes," I said. "They liked it."

"If the people like it," he said, "that's all that matters. That's good."

He thought of all those who came to see his fights as his friends, whether they rooted for him or not. His Maker, I discovered, he thought of as a friend, too, in a relationship in which he felt responsibility as protector.

"Chick tells me," I said to him once, "that you pray before every fight.

"That's right," he said, grinning.

"For what do you pray?"

"I pray that nobody get hurt," he said. "Then I pray that it be a good fight."

"Don't you ever pray to win?"

"No," he said, shaking his head. "I would never do that."

"Why not?" I said.

"Suppose I pray to win," he said. "The other boy, he pray to win, too. Then what God gonna do?"

Try to top that. ■

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June 1990: George Foreman-The World Is Falling At His Feet. Plus: Red-Hot Heavyweights color insert, Holyfield, Biggs, Richie Sandoval.

Oct. 1990: The Real Deal: Why Buster Douglas Will Whip Evander Holyfield. Plus: Graziano remembered, Whitaker-Nelson, Ken Norton, Terry Norris, James J. Corbett.

Dec. 1990: Buster Douglas: Did He

Leave His Best In Tokyo? Plus: Roger Mayweather, James J. Jeffries, The Year That Was: 1978.

Feb. 1991: For The Best Of Two Divisions, All Roads Lead To Chavez. Plus: Paez-Lopez, Glenwood Brown, Leonard-Norris preview, Jack Johnson.

April 1991: Boxing's Bible Belter: The Inner Strength Of Evander Holyfield. Plus: Michael Carbajal, The Lopez-Mitchell showdown, 1990 in review, Jack Dempsey, Are boxers overpaid?

June 1991: Evander Holyfield's Task: How To Get Rid Of 260 Pounds Of Flab In Five Minutes. Plus: Experts choose boxing's best, Meldrick Taylor, Hearns-Hill preview, Max Schmeling.

Aug. 1991: Tyson The Terrible: Mighty Mike Is Boxing's Baddest Man Again. Plus: Roberto Duran, Lindell Holmes, Julio Cesar Chavez, Primo Carnera, Muhammad Ali.

Oct. 1991: 12 Angry Men—The Meanest Fighters In Boxing. Plus: Braddock, Mercer-Morrison, Orlando Canizales, Meanest Fighters Ever, Year That Was: 1967.

Dec. 1991: Will A Few More Of These Finish Off Mike Tyson? Plus: Ezzard Charles, Foreman, Holyfield-Tyson, Floyd Patterson, John David Jackson.

Feb. 1992: Can Boxing Survive Without Mike Tyson? Plus: Julian Jackson, Mitchell-Lopez, Marciano, The Year That Was: 1972.

April 1992: Evander Holyfield: With Every Win, He Loses Respect. Plus: Ingemar Johansson, Rock Newman, year-end review and look ahead, Dempsey-Firpo.

June 1992: Boxing's Thrill-A-Minute Champion: How Much Time Is Left For Meldrick Taylor? Plus: Muhammad Ali, Holyfield-Bowe, Iran Barkley, Kelcie Banks, Jemal Hinton.

Aug. 1992: Holmes Challenges Holyfield: The Old Man Has A Chance If ... Plus: Iran Barkley, Eddie Cook, The Year That Was: 1952, George Foreman.

Oct. 1992: Michael Moorer Explodes! The Heavyweight With A Short Fuse. Plus: Bobby Czyz, Norris-Taylor, Riddick Bowe, The Year That Was: 1961.

Dec. 1992: Mike Tyson: He Could Get Out. Plus: Tony Tucker, Eddie Hopson, Ruddock-Lewis preview.

Feb. 1993: Chavez Tortures Camacho: Can He Become Greater Than Sugar Ray Robinson? Plus: Michael Nunn, Tim Littles, trainers, Foreman-Morrison preview.

April 1993: Riddick Bowe & Lennox Lewis Lead The Heavyweight Resurgence. Plus: Bowe-Holyfield round 10, Jemal Hinton, Dave Tiberi.

June 1993: The Old Man And The Fee: At $5-Million Per, George Foreman Will Never Retire. Plus: Morrison-Williams, Genaro Hernandez, Terry Norris.

Aug. 1993: Bowe, No! Can Jesse Ferguson Be 1993's Buster Douglas? Plus: Carbajal, Azumah, Harding-McCallum, Eric Griffin, the next great heavyweight.

Dec. 1993: Riddick Bowe's Year In Preview: Lennox Lewis Is The Least Of His Problems. Plus: Michael Carbajal, Ali-Foreman, Ricardo Lopez, Larry Hazzard.

Feb. 1994: Chavez-Whitaker: Was The Fix In? Plus: Chiquita Gonzalez, overrated/underrated, Corbett-Choynski.

April 1994: Hungry At The Wrong Time: Has Riddick Bowe Become The New Buster Douglas? Plus: Michael Bentt, Buddy McGirt, Jorge Luis Gonzalez, George Dixon, Joe Gans, Joe Walcott.

Aug. 1994: Beating Bredahl Was No Oscar-Winning Peformance: Why De La Hoya Still Has A Lot To Prove. Plus: Christy Martin, overrated/ underrated, Little-Nunn, Foreman-Holmes preview, Young Jack Thompson.

Oct. 1994: Michael Moorer's Image: Is It All Shadow & Light? Plus: Evander Holyfield, Egerton Marcus, John Michael Johnson, Gorilla Jones, Bowe-Donald preview.

Dec. 1994: Paz Survives Duran: "Pain Is Temporary, Pride Is Forever." Plus: Pernell Whitaker, Julio Cesar Chavez, Tony Green, Patterson-Kelley preview, George Godfrey.

Jan. 1995: Who Are Boxing's Real Warriors? Plus: Riddick Bowe, Marty Jakubowski, super middleweights, Bob Armstrong.

Feb. 1995 (84-Page Special): The Experts Debate: Pernell Whitaker—The Greatest Fighter Of His Era ... Or The Most Overrated? Plus: Greatest fighters who never won title, boxing's bad boys, pro debuts, Bruce Flowers.

April 1995: George Foreman (1974) vs. George Foreman (1995). Plus: Riddick Bowe, cheap-shot artists, catchweight fights, Young Peter Jackson.

June 1995: Foreman, Chavez, De La Hoya, & Jones—Hollywood Boxing Movies You'll Never See. Plus: Rocky Balboa, fighters we want out, Sosa-Williams.

Aug. 1995: Why Mike Tyson Won't Regain The Title. Plus: Alonzo Highsmith, overrated/underrated, Triple-Crown Showdown.

Oct. 1995 (All-Heavyweight Issue): More Hittable Than Lovable—Can Big George Survive Another Axel Breakdown? Plus: Mike Tyson, Larry Holmes, Bruce Seldon, Joe Louis.

Dec. 1995: Lewis vs. Morrison, Bowe vs. Holyfield: Who Will Survive To Fight Tyson? Plus: James Thunder, Sammy Fuentes, tattoos.

Feb. 1996: Roy Jones vs. Pernell Whitaker: World Boxing Picks The Pound-For-Pound Best. Plus: Frankie Randall, Butterbean, two-sport boxers.

April 1996: The 10 Best Fights Of 1996. Plus: Jeff Fenech, Quartey & Trinidad, fantasy boxing.

June 1996: Hey, Roy Jones, You Say You're Bored? Take These Six Steps To Tyson. Plus: Guys never in a bad fight, Lenzie Morgan, Cleveland Williams.

Fall 1996: "The Hardest Punch I Ever Landed": 10 Heavyweights Recall The Destruction. Plus: Frazier-Ali I fight poster (color), James Toney, heavyweight report card, Wilfredo Vazquez, Rocky.

Winter 1996: Myth vs. Reality. In Search Of The True Tyson (color). Plus: Lonnie Bradley, George Foreman & HBO, Bowe-Golota II preview.

Spring 1997: Is Andrew Golota Too Dangerous For Boxing? Plus: Bowe-Golota II (color), Michael Moorer, top heavyweight fights of '96, fantasy boxing, short fighters.

Summer 1997: Building The Perfect Heavyweight ... One Piece At A Time (color). Plus: Nielsen-Holmes, Heavyweight Explosion, fantasy boxing.

Fall 1997: The Search For The Next Great Heavyweight (color). Plus: Jesse Ferguson, fantasy boxing, Foreman phenomenon.

Winter 1997: If He Never Fights Again ... How Will Mike Tyson Be Remembered? (color). Plus: Roy Jones, Bert Cooper.

Spring 1998: A Look Back At '97 ... A Look Ahead To '98. Plus: Naseem Hamed (color).

Summer 1998: Tomorrow's Superstars: Six Who Will Lead Boxing Into The Next Century (color). Plus: Julio Cesar Chavez, David Tua.

Fall 1998: Piecing Together The Perfect Heavyweight Champion. Plus: Oscar De La Hoya (color), Riddick Bowe.

Winter 1998: Why Trinidad's Gonna Kick Oscar's Golden Butt (color). Plus: Foreman-Holmes, 10 fights that changed history.

Spring 1999: Oscar De La Hoya vs. Ike Quartey: World Boxing Picks The Winner (color). Plus: Mike Tyson debate, 10 greatest welterweight fights of all-time.

Summer 1999: To Hell With The Judges! Lennox Lewis Is The Champ! Plus: De La Hoya-Trinidad preview, the anti-Tyson era, Terronn Millett.

Fall 1999: Danger Ahead! Is Oscar's Macho Madness Dangerous To His Health? Plus: Ali vs. today's top 10, kayo victims, heavyweight report card.

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NEW FACES

DEBIND THAPA

Junior Bantamweight

By Joe Santoliquito

If Debind Thapa was going to survive in the United States without going bonkers or winding up in jail, there were some adjustments he would have to make first. It took a while, but the hyper junior bantamweight from Nepal soon discovered that dogs that sprang from bushes were not salivating lions looking to devour him. He also found out that it's illegal to go duck hunting with rocks—especially on the beaches of Atlantic City.

Thapa's culture shock is understandable. In his native land, a tiny Himalayan country tucked between Tibet and India, all he knew were hollow brick dwellings with dirt floors, running from lions and tigers in the jungle, and hunting and cooking his own meat for dinner. There was, however, one other thing Thapa was well-versed in—boxing. Fighting as a flyweight, he was Nepal's lone boxing representative at the 1996 Olympics, but lost in the opening round after sustaining a broken knuckle.

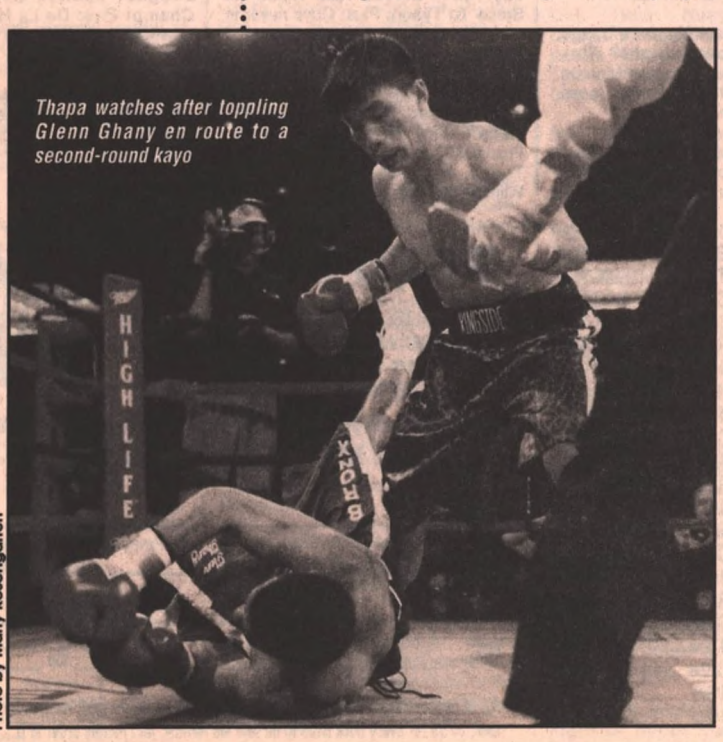
As the first pro from his country, Thapa, 10-0 (6), is currently inching toward contender status. Fighting on just two days notice in February, he scored a huge victory with a second-round knockout of Glenn Ghany, a highly touted New York City Golden Gloves champion, at Bally's Park Place in Atlantic City on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights*. Thapa showed impressive

(Continued on page 77)

PRO RECORD

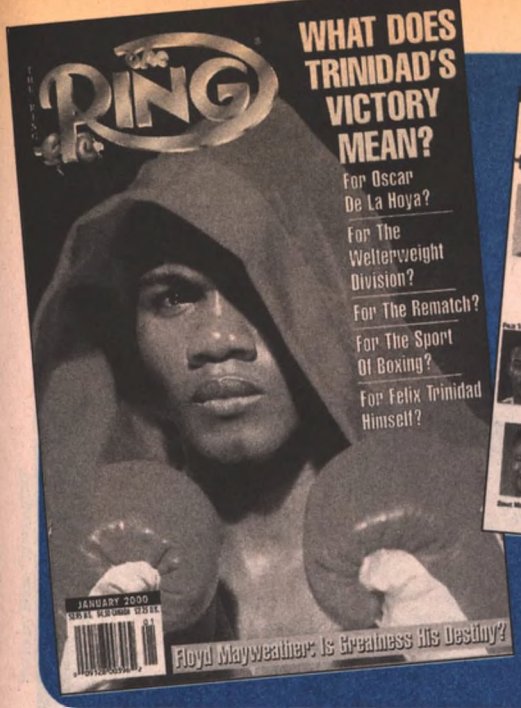
1998		
Nov. 7	Jerry Smith, Pleasantville, NJ	W 4
Dec. 15	Terineg Clark, Trenton, NJ	KO 1
1999		
Jan. 29	Pedro Santos, Atlantic City	W 4
April 17	Luis Diaz, Atlantic City	KO 1
May 13	Mike Thomas, Glen Burnie, MD	W 6
June 18	Lionel Odom, Harrisburg, PA	KO 4
Sept. 25	Coy Gibson, Harrisburg	KO 1
Oct. 29	Melquiades Ventura, Philadelphia	KO 1
2000		
Jan. 29	Ravil Mukhamadia, Atlantic City	W 8
Feb. 18	Glenn Ghany, Atlantic City	KO 2

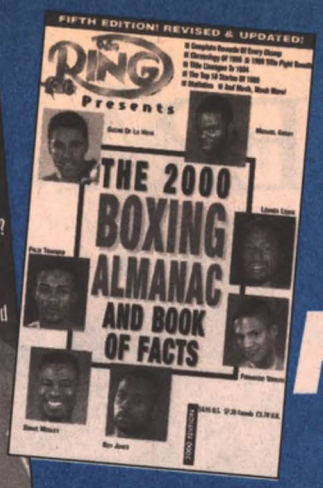
FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
10	10	0	0	6



Thapa watches after toppling Glenn Ghany en route to a second-round kayo

Photo by Marty Rosengarten





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CAMERA CLICKS

Photo by Teddy Blackburn

A gathering of ex-champions (and one almost-champion) sees former heavyweight contender Gerry Cooney and ex-middleweight champ Vito Antuofermo lend their support to ailing Hall of Fame three-division titlist Wilfred Benitez at a benefit in New York City.

Photo by Tom Casino/Showtime

When Mike Tyson was in England in January, he had to search high and low (in this case, very low) for sparring partners who could simulate the challenge Julius Francis would present. Tyson is reportedly stepping it up a notch and going after 10-year-olds in preparation for Lou Savarese.

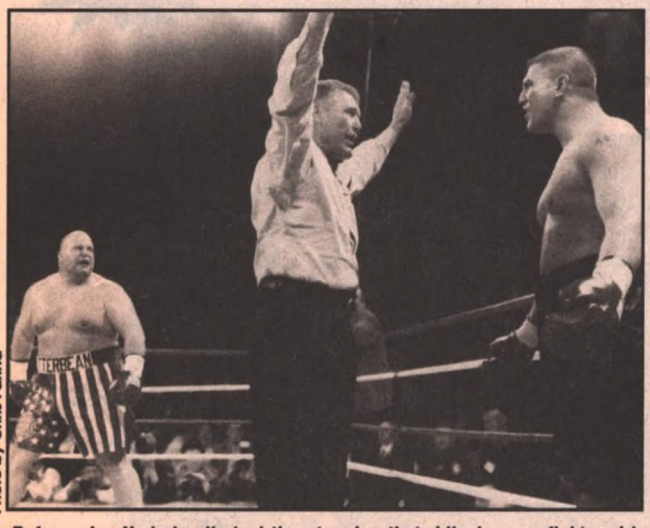

Photo by Chris Farina

Referee Jay Nady hardly had time to wipe that ridiculous prefight smirk off his face before calling a halt to the Butterbean-George Linberger fight. Linberger, who was kayoed in 19 seconds, doesn't seem pleased with Nady's stoppage, and neither does The Bean, who appears unusually angry for a guy who just made the easiest money of his life.

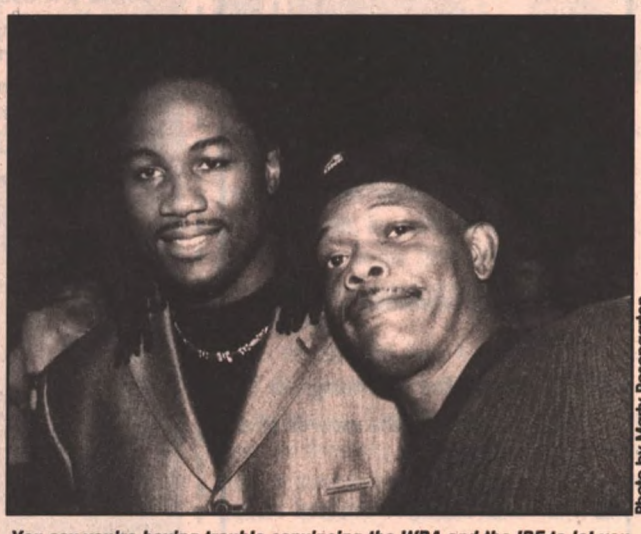

Photo by Marty Rosengarten

You say you're having trouble convincing the WBA and the IBF to let you keep their belts? Just call in the star of The Negotiator, *Samuel L. Jackson, to help hammer out the deal. Heavyweight champ Lennox Lewis went on to confirm for Jackson that a Quarter Pounder really is called a Royale with Cheese in Europe.*

Ladies and gentlemen, the five unhappiest people in the world! When (from left) Al Mitchell, Mat Tinley, David Reid, Dan Goossen, and Marvin Garris gathered at the press conference following Reid's unanimous-decision loss to Felix Trinidad, there wasn't a visible tooth in the whole bunch.

Photo by Brian Cannon/DKP

Supporting the argument that male boxers should be allowed to wear sports bras in the ring also, extremely heavy heavyweights Imani Lee and Al Lassiter trade shots during a four-rounder in February. I guess we should just be happy that their trunks stayed up.

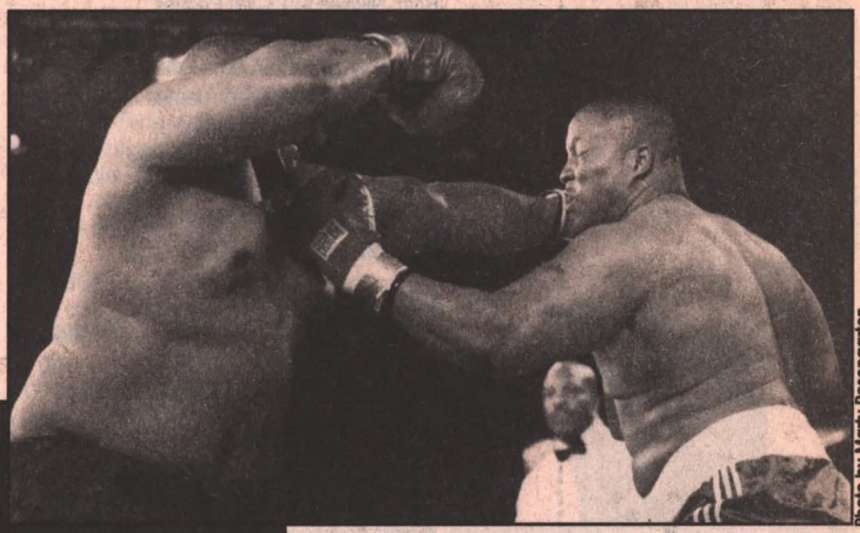

Photo by Marty Rosengarten

Photo by Ray Bailey

New York City boxing scribes Tim Smith and Michael Katz appear to have been switched from the pugilism beat over to the go-go bar beat. Actually, this photo was taken at a Cedric Kushner-promoted February fight card at the Hammerstein Ballroom, and yes, we endorse the idea of girls dancing on the tables, even if they take away from the purity and integrity of the sport.

NOSTALGIA CORNER

Many of baseball great Yogi Berra's sayings became part of the American culture, but somehow the one-liner he offered to former middleweight contender Don Fullmer didn't quite endure. "If you were half as good as your brother Gene, you'd be twice as good as you are right now," Berra told him, prompting Fullmer to throw this baseball-mitted left uppercut.

SUMMARY

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Oleg Maskaev KO 7 Sedreck Fields
Wladimir Klitschko KO 1 Wolfgramm
Hasim Rahman W 10 Marion Wilson
Shannon Briggs KO 3 Warren Williams
Monte Barrett KO 7 Jimmy Thunder
Corrie Sanders KO 1 Al Cole
Lamon Brewster W 10 Richard Mason
Vaughn Bean W 10 Terry Porter
Larry Donald KO 2 Mark Bradley
Henry Akinwande KO 1 Christopher Sirengo
Mike Holden W 12 Julius Francis
Robert Davis W 10 Charles Shufford
Brian Nielsen KO 3 Jeff Pegues
Tim Witherspoon KO 1 Joe Ballard
Ahmad Abdin W 10 Derek Amos
Ezra Sellers KO 8 Drexie James
Nate Jones KO 2 Matt Green
Cliff Etienne W 10 Harold Sconiers
Cliff Etienne KO 1 James Jones
Sean Carrigan KO 2 Kevin Robertson
Butterbean KO 1 George Linberger

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Juan Carlos Gomez KO 2 Joseph Siluvangi
(Retains WBC Title)
Sebastiaan Rothmann W 12 Damon Reed

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Antonio Tarver KO 1 Ernest Mateen
Will Taylor W 10 Richard Grant
William Guthrie W 8 Wesley Martin
Yawe Davis W 12 Mohammed Benguesmiah
Jesus Ruiz KO 4 Glenn Robinson
Glen Kelly W 12 Mosene Sorovi
Dario Matteoni W 12 Giuseppe Ferrazzo
Chris Johnson KO 5 Tyler Hughes
Julian Letterlough KO 2 Vinson Durham
Jacqui Frazier-Lyde KO 3 Annie Brooks

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Sven Ottke W 12 Lloyd Bryan
(Retains IBF Title)
William Joppy W 10 Fernando Zuniga
(Non-Title Bout)
Charles Brewer KO 2 Laverne Clark
Dingaan Thobela W 12 Soon Botes
Santiago Samaniego KO 5 Macelino Masoe
Laila Ali KO 1 Crystal Arcand

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Antwun Echols W 10 Anthony Ivory
Tony Marshall W 10 Ray Domenge
Davey Hilton W 10 Edward Hall
Armand Krajnc KO 2 Jonathan Corn
Julio Cesar Vasquez W 10 Jorge Sclarandi
Howard Eastman KO 4 Viktor Fessechtko
Stephane Ouellet W 8 Thomas Cameron

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Felix Trinidad W 12 David Reid
(Wins WBA Title)
Harry Simon KO 10 Enrique Areco
Oba Carr KO 8 Yory Boy Campas
Bronco McKart KO 2 Moises Rivera
Wayne Alexander KO 3 Paul Samuels
Carl Daniels W 10 Ray Collins
J.C. Candelo KO 9 Gary Jones
Roman Karmazin KO 4 Nico Touriry
Robert Frazier W 10 Jose Rivera
Cleveland Corder W 8 Juan Soberanes
Fathi Missaoui KO 6 Greg Johnson

WELTERWEIGHTS
Oscar De La Hoya KO 7 Derrell Coley
(Subsequently Awarded WBC Title)
Arturo Gatti KO 2 Joey Gamache
Thomas Damgaard W 12 Phillip Holiday
Andrew Murray W 10 Larry Marks
Kofi Jantuah KO 5 Alejandro Jimenez
Fred Pendleton KO 2 Ed Goins
Alessandro Duran W 12 Andrei Pestriaev
Larry Mosley W 4 Edgar Pedraza

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS
Mickey Ward KO 8 Shea Neary
Reggie Green KO 5 Maurico Rodriguez
Teddy Reid W 12 Emanuel Burton
Ray Oliveira W 10 Vivian Harris
Oktay Urkal W 12 Mikhael Krivolapov
Eamonn Magee KO 1 Joseph Miyumo
Terrance Cauthen KO 7 Johnny Jones
Christy Martin W 8 Belinda Laracuente

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Steve Johnston KO 2 Julio Alvarez
(Retains WBC Title)
Paul Spadafora W 12 Victoriano Sosa
(Retains IBF Title)
Gilbert Serrano KO 5 Hiroyuki Sakamoto
(Retains WBA Title)
Angel Manfredy KO 4 Sean Fletcher
Angel Manfredy W 10 Vincent Howard
Artur Grigorijan KO 9 Sandro Casamonica
John-John Molina KO 8 Juan Carlos Suarez
Lovemore Ndou KO 9 Renato Cornett
Alejandro Gonzalez W 12 Steve Forbes
Ben Tackie W 10 Golden Johnson
Wilfrido Ruiz KO 4 Reggie Sanders
Mike Griffith KO 4 John Roby

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS
Floyd Mayweather W 12 Goyo Vargas
(Retains WBC Title)
Diego Corrales KO 3 Derrick Gainer
(Retains IBF Title)

Jesus Chavez KO 6 Daryl Pinckney
Acelino Freitas KO 1 Javier Jauregui
Robbie Peden W 12 Carlos Rios
Michael Gomez W 12 Dean Pithie
Affif Djelti KO 6 Charles Shepherd
Daniel Attah W 12 Aldo Valtierra

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Naseem Hamed KO 4 Vuyani Bungu
Juan Carlos Ramirez KO 11 Steve Robinson
Wilfredo Vazquez W 8 Antonio Salas
David Vazquez W 12 Max Gomez
Victor Polo W 8 Fernando Velardez
Phillip Ndou KO 1 Pascal Montulet
Istvan Kovacs KO 2 Juan Manuel Chavez
Radford Beasley KO 5 Claure Rojas
Paul Lloyd KO 1 Foudil Madani

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

Erik Morales W 12 Marco Antonio Barrera
(Retains WBC Title)
Bones Adams W 12 Nestor Garza
(Wins WBA Title)
Enrique Sanchez KO 7 Jesus Sarabia
Antonio Cermeno KO 6 Arcelio Diaz
Manny Pacquiao KO 4 Arnel Barotillo
Michael Brodie KO 9 Salim Medjkoune
Danny Romero KO 5 Adarryl Johnson

BANTAMWEIGHTS

Paulie Ayala W 12 Johnny Bredahl
(Retains WBA Title)
Veerapol Sahaprom W 12 Adan Vargas
(Retains WBC Title)
Jorge Lacierva W 12 Mauricio Pastrana
Cuauhtemoc Gomez W 8 Julio Cardona
Dario Azuaga KO 1 Julio Clerico Oliva
Evangelio Perez KO 10 Hugo Dianzo

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

Jesus Rojas KO 7 Hideyasu Ishihara
Jesper Jensen W 12 Edgar Cardenas
Diego Morales KO 1 Maikito Martinez
Vernie Torres W 12 Genaro Garcia
Keiji Yamaguchi D 10 Hyun Soong Kim
Debind Thapa KO 2 Glenn Ghany

FLYWEIGHTS

Medgoen Toyota-Thailand W 12
Masaki Kawabata
(Retains WBC Title)
Alejandro Montiel KO 6 Alfredo Virgen
David Guerault W 8 Diego Andrade
Peter Culshaw W 12 Oscar Andrade
Everardo Morales KO 2 Raul Juarez
Ruben Sanchez-Leon W 12 Gabriel Munoz
Nelson Dieppa KO 3 Manuel Noyola

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

Hawk Makepula W 12 Jake Matlala

STRAWWEIGHTS

Noel Arambulet W 12 Jose Garcia
(Retains WBA Title)

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RINGSIDE REPORTS

FIGHTER *of the* MONTH

It's not often a guy goes 0-1 and gets named Fighter of the Month, especially when other boxers like Felix Trinidad and Bones Adams put together such noteworthy performances in the same period of eligibility. But Barrera is no ordinary loser. He gave an exceptional account of himself against one of the best fighters alive, Erik Morales, before dropping a highly disputed split decision. He boxed, he slugged, he took a beating in order to give a beating, and yet he didn't receive the WBC super bantamweight belt at the end of his grueling night's work.

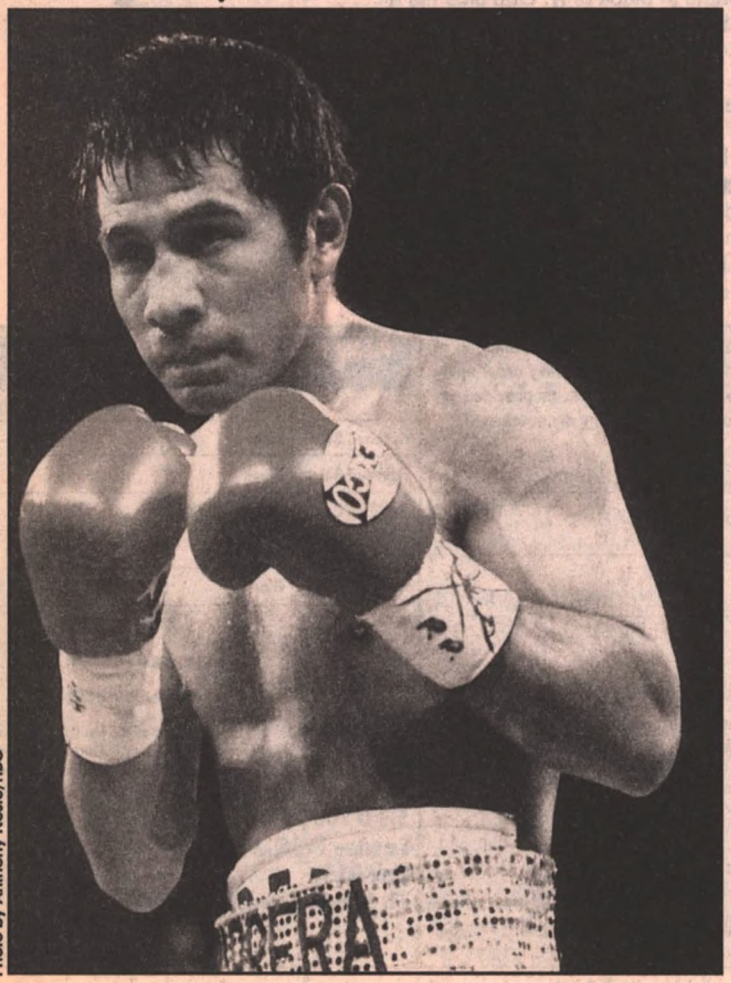


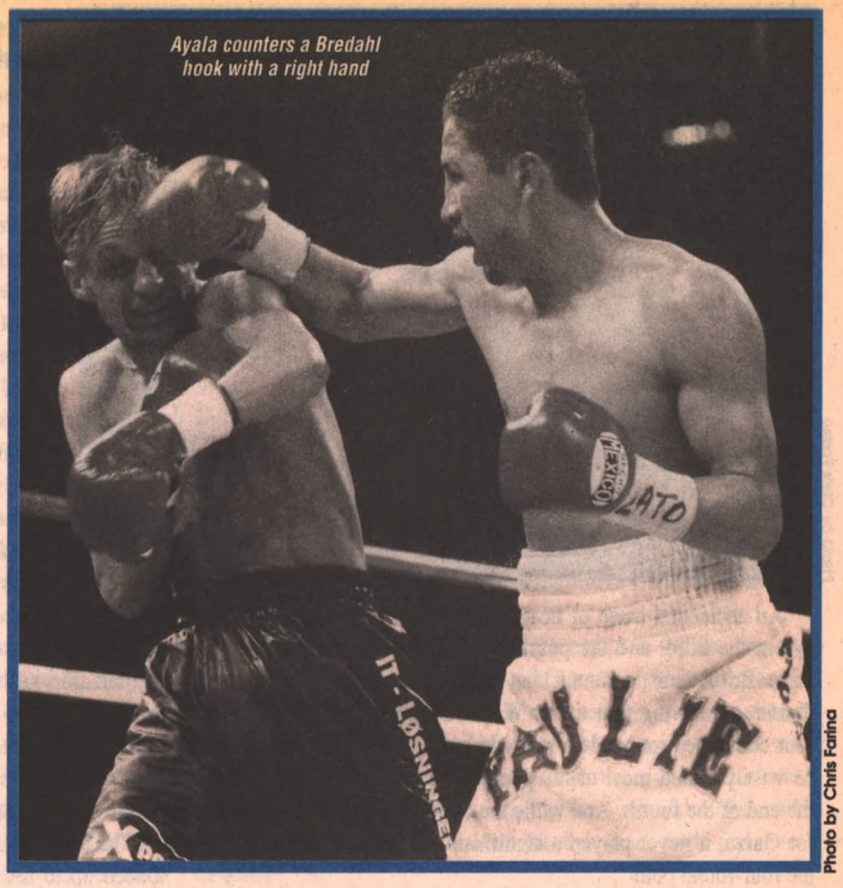
Photo by Anthony Neste/HBO

It was generally believed, after seeing Morales struggle at times with Wayne McCullough, that Barrera's pressuring style would give his Mexican compatriot problems. The biggest question was whether Barrera had the chin to take Morales' awesome right hand. As it turned out, he did, and he seemed to nearly everyone to have done enough after 12 thrilling rounds to earn a close win. We know it's not quite the same as getting credit for the victory he deserved, but Barrera has been reinstalled at number one in our 122-pound ratings and garnered our Fighter of the Month honors. Who knows? Another couple of losses like this against guys like Naseem Hamed and Johnny Tapia, and Barrera could become the first boxer ever to lose all his fights and be named Fighter of the Year.

• • • •

Marco Antonio Barrera

Paulie Ayala W 12 Johnny Bredahl



Ayala counters a Bredahl hook with a right hand

Photo by Chris Farina

Las Vegas, Nevada: There were snickers and the obligatory "Danish pastry" wisecracks from members of the media when the frail-looking Bredahl peeled off his clothes and stepped onto the scale at the weigh-in for his match with WBA bantamweight champion Ayala. But midway into the closely contested match at the Mandalay Bay Events Center, it looked like the gaunt challenger from Copenhagen would have the last laugh. And if it hadn't been for a flash knockdown in the second round and a determined stretch drive by Ayala, the title may very well have changed hands. But in the end, the little warrior from Ft. Worth, Texas, prevailed via majority decision for the second successful defense of the belt he won from Johnny Tapia in 1999's Fight of the Year.

In the opening round, Bredahl, who enjoyed a five-inch reach advantage, displayed excellent lateral movement and quick, accurate flurries that more than offset the occasional lunging right from southpaw Ayala. Then, early in the second, the defending champion knocked Bredahl down with a right. Unhurt, the 31-year-old challenger quickly jumped to his feet and outboxed Ayala so thoroughly the remainder of the round, judge Chuck Giampa and THE RING only gave Ayala a 10-9 edge, instead of the 10-8 advantage customarily afforded a fighter who scores a clean knockdown.

Following an uneventful third, Bredahl, 117½, clearly won the fourth and fifth. Ayala, 118, scored early in both rounds, but the nimble Bredahl came back to control the action with shifty, side-to-side movement and crisp counters. Ayala, 29, did manage to get close enough to connect with a couple of decent shots in the sixth, but he was loading up, looking to please his many fans among the announced crowd of 3,378, instead of just letting his hands go.

It was one of those fights where the judges frequently had to choose between Bredahl's light but frequent punches and Ayala's sporadic powershots. But as the bout moved into the championship rounds, Bredahl became more and more negative, while Ayala maintained steady pressure and began to land a greater percentage of his blows. A left hook to the body visibly hurt Bredahl in the 12th, and Ayala was clearly the stronger of the two at the finish.

Judge Guillermo Perez (Panama) scored it even at 114-114, but was overruled by Al Siciliano (USA) and Giampa (USA), who saw it for Ayala, 116-111 and 115-113, respectively. THE RING also had Ayala winning, 116-114.

"With the win, yes, I was satisfied," said Ayala, 30-1 (12), when asked how he felt about his uneven performance. "Still, I didn't catch him to the body as I would have liked to."

"I thought I won seven or eight rounds, but what's done is done," said Bredahl after seeing his record dip to 45-2 (23). "I knew in the U.S. I had to win by knockout. I would love to fight him again in my home ring."

"Tell Mogens Palle [Bredahl's promoter] to put up a lot of money, and we'll be delighted to fight you again in Copenhagen," replied Bob Arum.

The referee was Richard Steele.

Television: TVKO

Promoter: Top Rank

(3-4-00)

Nigel Collins

Bones Adams W 12 Nestor Garza

Las Vegas, Nevada: In what was a stunning upset to almost everybody outside of those who just happened to stop by the Manadalay Bay spa the morning before the fight, Adams dominated heavily favored Garza to lift the WBA super bantamweight title via 12-round unanimous decision on the Ayala-Bredahl card. But for those who witnessed Garza torturing himself in both the sauna and steamroom in a desperate, 11th-hour attempt to boil down to 122 pounds, Adams' victory wasn't so big of a surprise. That's not to say Adams wouldn't have won if Garza had made weight without any problem, but it probably wouldn't have been such a one-sided affair.

It didn't take long for everybody to realize the defending champion from Reynosa, Mexico, was in for a tough night. The sharpshooting Adams caught the advancing Garza with a quick right, followed by a cracking left hook that floored him midway into the opening round. Garza beat referee Joe Cortez' count, but still appeared stunned when Adams pinned him against the ropes and pelted him with combinations. Garza's head soon cleared enough for him to fight his way free, but he never really got back into the fight.

Adams rams a right uppercut into Garza's jaw

Photo by Chris Farina

An accidental clash of heads opened a cut over Garza's right eye in the third, and the possibility of a technical draw loomed large. But Adams, a Kentuckian fighting out of Las Vegas, is no dummy. Knowing that under WBA rules a title fight has to go four completed rounds before it can be decided by the scorecards, he wisely aimed most of his punches away from the injury until the end of the fourth. And while the cut was obviously a handicap for Garza, it never played a significant role after the bout passed the four-round point.

Although Adams, 39-3-3 (18), has never been known as a big puncher, he dropped Garza, 23, again in the fifth with a zippy left-right-left combination, and at the midway point led by eight points on judge Marcial Vargas' (Venezuela) card and six points each on the cards of Ove Oveson (Denmark) and Patricia Jarman-Manning (USA).

The 25-year-old Adams, who turned pro when he was 16, hurt Garza again in the seventh and also totally controlled the eighth. The Mexican hooker was still gamely pressing forward, but the combination of Adams' superior speed and boxing skills, coupled with his own weakened state, were too much for him to overcome. An injured right hand, which he said he hurt in the fifth, threw Adams into a strictly defensive mode the last two rounds. But by then, Garza, 37-2 (29), needed a knockout to win, and Adams coasted home a unanimous winner by tallies of 118-108 (Vargas), 116-110 (Oveson), and 116-110 (Jarman-Manning). THE RING scorecard also had Adams way out in front, 118-109.

Adams' ascension to the WBA 122-pound throne capped an unlikely comeback by a fighter who was pretty much written off as a failed prodigy after he suffered an 11th-round TKO defeat in a bid to lift the IBF bantamweight title from Orlando Canizales in 1993. He got another opportunity to prove himself when Garza's original opponent, Danny Romero, declined the invitation, deciding instead to fight an undercard tune-up against Adarryl Johnson, which the former flyweight and junior bantam champion won via fifth-round TKO.

Television: TVKO
Promoter: Top Rank
(3-4-00)
Nigel Collins

Vassiliy Jirov KO 9 Saul Montana

Boise, Idaho: IBF cruiserweight champ Jirov is one of those guys who's probably never going to have another easy fight. He had plenty of them on the way up, knocking out hopeless opposition in a round or two with regularity, but since he began fighting world-class opposition, "The Russian Tiger" has always found his cheeks red and swollen—and his hand raised—at the end of two-way slugfests. His fight with number-one contender Montana at the Bank of America Center (the site of Montana's win over local hero Kenny Keene in '97) followed this pattern, with Jirov registering his second successful title defense with a stoppage at 2:55 of the ninth round of a back-and-forth fight.

The southpaw Jirov, 189½, tried to carefully outbox Montana, 189½, behind his right jab in the early going, and was doing quite well for the first two rounds despite eating occasional counters from the slow-fisted Mexican. Montana, 29, finally broke through with a well-timed four-punch combination in the third and had the champion under pressure at the bell. The boxing match was over and the fight was on, with the competitors trading bodyshots in the fourth before Jirov, Scottsdale, Arizona (via Kazakhstan), shook the challenger just before the bell with a flurry of shots.

The 25-year-old Jirov, a gold medalist at the '96 Olympics, loaded up to the body and head in the fifth, but Montana came back in the sixth with his own hard right hands to the body. In the seventh, Montana's best round, Jirov was staggered by an excellent left hand, but before the challenger could follow up, he slipped and saw his momentum interrupted by referee Jerry Armstrong (USA) stepping in to wipe off his gloves. His moment passed, and Jirov, 23-0 (21), took control in the eighth and ninth, finally scoring with a left to the temple late in round nine that caused Montana to drop his hands to his sides and turn away. The champion pounced, scoring with four flush shots to the defenseless Mexican before Armstrong halted the bout. About a second after the fight was waved off, Montana, 33-7 (29), slumped to the canvas, where he remained for several minutes.

Afterward, Jirov called out the likes of Roy Jones and James Toney and also suggested his next fight may be a non-title bout against a heavyweight. As long as the opponent is halfway decent, it's unlikely that Jirov will have an easy go of it.

Television: Univision
Promoter: Top Rank
(2-12-00)

Paul Spadafora W 12 Victoriano Sosa

Verona, New York: It sure wasn't the romp he enjoyed in his first defense of the IBF lightweight title less than three months earlier. The chants of "Spad-die, Spad-die!" that had rocked the arena in his hometown of Pittsburgh throughout the Renato Cornett defense weren't heard until the final rounds. The nervous crowd at the Turning Stone Casino had been kept holding its collective breath. But Spadafora, 133, showed what he was made of in coming off the floor to outpace dangerous challenger Sosa, 133, Dominican Republic, in a suspenseful contest of tactics.

While Cornett had been made for Spadafora, Sosa emphatically was not. The southpaw titlist looked tense at the start, and ended the first with a puffy right cheek. The gangly 25-year-old challenger's loose, surprise-attack style turned concern into nightmare in the third. A spearing right drove Spadafora back, where a left hook and right followed by a glancing yet equilibrium-disturbing hook to the temple folded his legs like a rickety lawn chair. Struggling up, the champion received the benefit of a long inspection from local ref Bob Fenocchi, but was still trying desperately to pump life into his legs when the torment at last resumed. Reeling this way and that on shaky pins, a glove finally touched the canvas to force another knockdown count. But by a monumental display of determination, Spadafora made it out of the round to begin the long road back.

Spadafora, 24, looked focused coming out for the fourth. Nothing happened in that round, and that seemed to mark the turning point. Although Sosa remained dangerous to the end, he wasn't fighting the same Spadafora. Brought around by savvy trainer Jesse Reid, the tenacious titleholder began to relax and take command. The rounds were all close, with the challenger still landing some eye-catching shots. But he wasn't putting enough together, while Spadafora was making the fight. The whole second half was a race for the finish line, with the titlist relentlessly catching up. He wasn't winning big, but he was doing just enough to edge the rounds. By the 10th, his best round, Spadafora was once again showing his trademark slipping and countering that had electrified the crowd in his title-winning contest against Israel Cardona. Sosa, 24-2-1 (19), kept trying for the big punch that would finish what he had started in the third, but Spadafora, 29-0 (14), wasn't going to be caught like that again.

The local hero had just enough rounds to nip the challenger at the wire. The judges, all from New York, were unanimous: Don Ackerman had it 114-112, Tommy Hicks saw it 115-112, and Frank Adams scored it 116-111. THE RING agreed on the winner, but by a mere 114-113. Once again, a 15-round distance would likely have eliminated the shadow of doubt that hung over the fair, but infinitely close, verdict.

Television: ESPN2

Promoter: Michael Acri Productions

(3-3-00)

J. R. Jowett

Spadafora struggles to beat ref Fenocchi's count

Photo by Pat Orr

Medgoen Toyota-Thailand W 12 Masaki Kawabata

Samut Sakorn, Thailand: Thailand's unbeaten Medgoen (previously fighting as Medgoen Singsurat, and then Medgoen 3K-Battery), 111, kept the WBC flyweight throne by relentlessly peppering Japan's Kawabata, 112, en route to a lopsided decision over 12 heats at Mahachai Villa. Judge Brad Vocale (Australia) scored it 119-109, Bruce McTavish (New Zealand) had it a 120-105 shutout, and Frank Marti (Switzerland) saw it 118-110, all for the defending champ, who was making his first title defense. The referee was Richie Davis (England).

Kawabata aggressively initiated the action in the opening session. But Medgoen solved his opponent's style in the second round and piled up points steadily thereafter. In every round, Kawabata attempted to attack first, but Medgoen retaliated with much more abundant combinations to the game but slower Japanese. The champ had him at bay in the ninth and 10th rounds, but Kawabata refused to go down through sheer pride and determination.

Medgoen, who dethroned Filipino lefty Manny Pacquiao via third-round kayo last September, raised his unbeaten mark to 20-0 (12). Kawabata, six years his senior at 27, fell to 16-4-2 (8).

Promoter: Virat Vachirarattanawong's Diamond Promotions

(2-25-00)

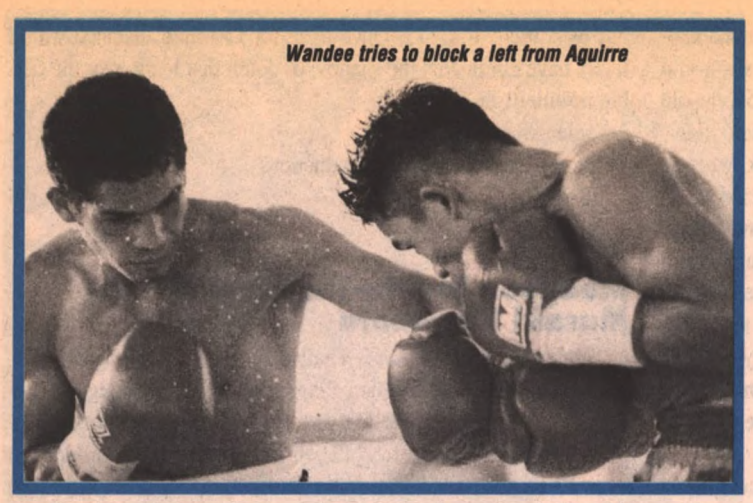
Joe Koizumi

Jose Antonio Aguirre W 12 Wandee Singwangcha

Samut Sakorn, Thailand: Mexican switch-hitter Aguirre, 104½, claimed the WBC strawweight title as he was awarded a majority decision over Thailand's Wandee (previously fighting as Wandee Chor Chareon), 103½, over 12 close rounds. Judges Tony Perez (USA) and Barbara Perez (USA) both had it for the Mexican, by scores of 115-113 and 116-112, respectively, while Marty Sammon (USA) saw it 114-114. The referee was David Chung (Korea).

Aguirre, the WBC's number-one contender, took the initiative by utilizing his superior height and reach from the outset. He pressed the action in the earlier rounds, but showed some signs of fatigue in the second half.

Wandee, who acquired the WBC interim title by beating Japan-based Taiwanese fighter Rocky Lin by a hairline verdict in August '98 (then became the full champ when Ricardo Lopez moved up in weight in October '99),



Wandee tries to block a left from Aguirre

retaliated and began closing the gap in the later rounds. But his aggression came a bit too late to overcome his early deficit on points. The newly crowned champ Aguirre, 24, improved his ledger to 23-1-1 (14). Wandee, 20, dropped to 26-4 (7) after failing in his first defense of the full title.

Promoter: Sahasombhop Srisomvongse

(2-11-00)

Joe Koizumi

Arturo Gatti KO 2 Joey Gamache

New York, New York: With the clock ticking on his fighting days, 33-year-old former junior lightweight champion Gamache lobbied the executives at HBO long and hard for a fight with the popular Gatti. Knowing how vulnerable Gatti is, Gamache figured he had a shot at an upset win that would breathe new life into his career. But he also had to know that, without a significant win since losing the WBA 130-pound title to Tony Lopez in '92, a loss to Gatti would surely mean the end of the road. Which is exactly what the doctors have recommended after Gamache suffered a severe concussion in a brutal, controversial knockout loss at Madison Square Garden.

Gatti, who officially weighed in at 141 pounds but ballooned up to a ridiculous 160 pounds by fight time, dwarfed Gamache, who tipped the scales at 140¼ and was just 146 when the opening bell rang. *(For more on the weight controversy, see page 8.)* After Gatti, 27, calmly dominated a battle of jabs over the first two minutes of the bout, the difference in power became evident when a straight right hand to the chin toppled Gamache, pitching the upper half of his body over the bottom rope. The Lewiston, Maine, veteran got up with no difficulty, but Gatti moved right in and, just a few seconds later, put Gamache on his rear with a whistling left hook. Gamache was a bit less steady when he rose this time, but referee Benji Estevez (USA) let him continue, and the two brave warriors engaged in a thrilling exchange of power shots—Gatti walking through Gamache's, Gamache being staggered by most of Gatti's—until the bell rang. Gatti then clocked Gamache with an accidental shot just after the bell that sent him reeling to the wrong corner.

Gamache correctly responded to the ring doctor's questions between rounds as to where he was ("I'm at the Garden, it's the Gatti fight"), earning himself the right to take more punishment from the Jersey City, New Jersey-based Canadian. About 30 seconds into round two, Gatti froze his man with a big left hook followed by an even bigger right hand, setting the dazed Gamache up for the finish. Gatti waited a moment for his shell-shocked opponent to open his guard, unleashed a perfect right uppercut that knocked the New Englander's eyes back in his head, and then finished the brilliant three-punch combination with an academic left and right that stretched Gamache out on the canvas. Estevez waved the fight off at 41 seconds of the round without a count.

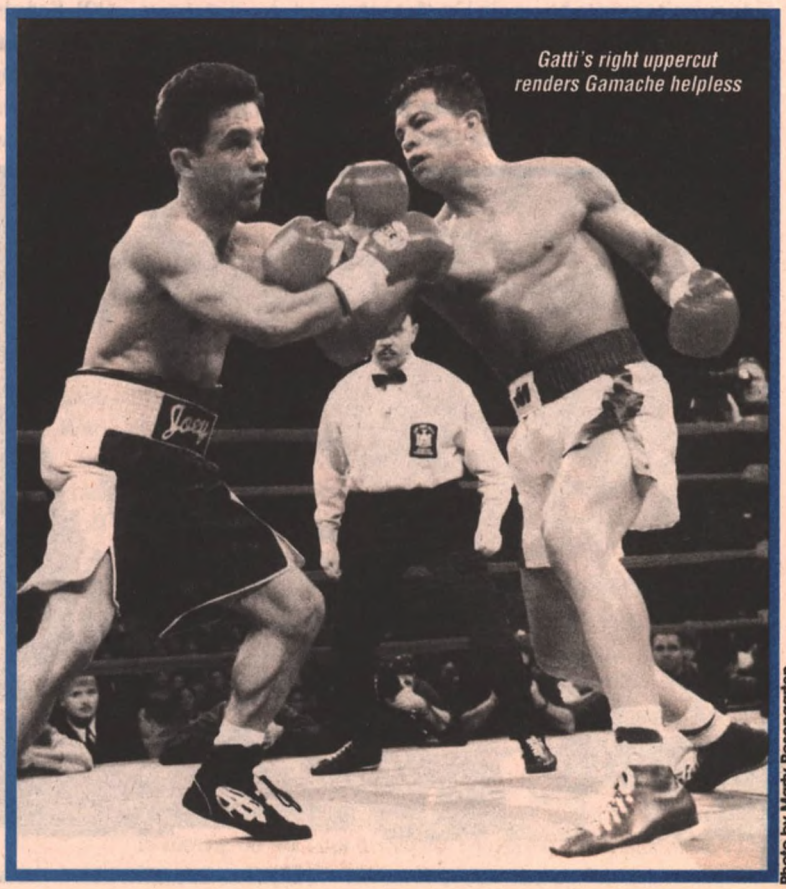
"I didn't expect it to end that quickly," Gatti, 31-4 (26), said. "The jab opened it up and gave me opportunities. After the first round, I knew right away I was much stronger than him."

Gamache, 55-4 (38), needed close to 10 minutes before he was able to walk from the ring. He was then taken to St. Vincent's Hospital, where doctors recommended he call it a career. Gatti's boxing future is considerably brighter, as he was looking forward to a spot on the undercard of Lennox Lewis-Michael Grant on April 29 and a possible title shot against WBC super lightweight champ Kostya Tszyu in November.

Promoter: Main Events

(2-26-00)

Eric Raskin ■



Gatti's right uppercut renders Gamache helpless

Photo by Marty Rosengarten

Felix Trinidad

(Continued from page 21)

Even the high end of that assessment means that Don King probably lost several million dollars promoting Trinidad-Reid, and even though King is built along the same lines as Santa Claus, he's nowhere near as altruistic. The truth is that while Trinidad has plenty of options besides a rematch with De La Hoya, none of them, with the exception of a fight with Jones, would be anywhere near as lucrative.

A fight with Trinidad also makes sense from Jones' point of view. His only possible pay-per-view-worthy adversary in the light heavyweight ranks is Dariusz Michalczewski, and that evaluation is based strictly on Michalczewski's glossy 41-0 (31) record. At the box office, the Germany-based Pole means absolutely nothing to most American fans. *Friday Night Fights'* Max Kellerman is absolutely correct when he says Michalczewski deserves a shot at Jones, but even Kellerman's endorsement won't turn Jones-Michalczewski into a PPV money-spinner.

Things change so swiftly in the boxing world, it's virtually impossible to predict what will happen tomorrow. But having said that, let's take a look at a plausible scenario that could lead to a Trinidad-Jones fight. To start, Trinidad certainly sounded willing following his persuasive victory over Reid, but said he wants to take it one step at a time. And who could blame him? The WBA belt still had Reid's sweat on it, and the media was already demanding to know what was next for the new champ.

"I plan to move up in weight slowly, up to the 160s, and maybe fight William Joppy," said Trinidad at the postfight press conference. "After that, I might move up to 168 and fight Roy Jones."

WBA middleweight champion Joppy, who decisioned Fernando Zuniga in a non-title bout on the Trinidad-Reid undercard, is already under promotional contract to King, so there wouldn't be too many obstacles to making the match. Joppy also has a new manager in well-connected veteran Stan Hoffman, the sort of guy who is smart enough to understand that it's unlikely Joppy will ever again come close to making the kind of money a Trinidad fight would bring, and will go after the match in an appropriately aggressive manner.

Trinidad shouldn't have too much difficulty beating Joppy, a quick-handed and skillful craftsman, but not even in the same ballpark as Trinidad in the punching department. There's also a cavernous gap in the level of competition they're used to fighting. The biggest name on Joppy's 29-1-1 (22) record is Roberto Duran, who was 47 years old at the time they fought. Trinidad, on the other hand, has beaten a trio of Olympic champions—Pernell Whitaker, De La Hoya, and Reid—in a 13-month span. And even Whitaker, the oldest of the three, was much closer to his prime than Duran was when Joppy stopped him in three rounds in '98.

There's always a chance that somewhere down the line a deal will be worked out for a Trinidad-De La Hoya rematch, and if it is, it will probably be at a catchweight of 150 or 151 pounds. If that happens, and De La Hoya wins, it would obviously kill a Jones-Trinidad fight, but if Trinidad prevails again, a fight between him and Jones would be even more attractive.

Fans should not expect any scenario to unfold quickly, as there is bound to be an exorbitant amount of disingenuous posturing by rival promoters King and Arum in the coming months. But with De La Hoya set to face Sugar Shane Mosley on June 17, Trinidad has to find something to do in the meantime, and fighting Joppy as a prelude to, literally, bigger things would be a productive way to mark time and set the stage for a possible Jones fight. There is, of course, a reasonable chance that Mosley will hand De La Hoya his second defeat, and in that eventuality, Trinidad will have even more reason to look toward Jones as his next superfight adversary.

At the very least, Trinidad deserves to be reevaluated in light of his thumping of Reid. True, the Philadelphian isn't in De La Hoya's league, but he's just as quick and did something The Golden Boy never even tried to do—put Tito on the deck. Even if you still think Trinidad-Jones is a joke, ask yourself how you would feel if Tito beat De La Hoya again, and really kicked his butt the next time. Would a showdown with Jones still seem so absurd?

To a large degree, Americans who don't speak Spanish, and that includes the majority of the media, don't really understand what a driven athlete Trinidad is. To much of the American public, he seems a happy-go-lucky assassin, the kind of fellow who takes as much delight in waving a rubber chicken in the air and calling it "Chicken De La Hoya" as he does in bowling over opponents with his celebrated left hook. But there's more to Trinidad than the drum-beating, flag-waving fiesta that seems to surround him everywhere he goes these days. He is deadly serious about his craft and still trains with the same enthusiasm he did as a boy, preparing himself for every fight as if it were the ultimate contest of his career. He also carries the confidence of a man who has never known defeat, a man who truly believes he is unbeatable. The intentions of such a man should never be taken lightly, even if they include a fight against the boxer generally considered the best in the business.

For years now, Jones has been looking ahead in his quest for an ultimate challenge, searching among bigger men for an opponent who will give him a fight that will define his Hall of Fame career. But maybe he's been looking in the wrong direction. Maybe Jones should have been looking over his shoulder all along, because Trinidad is coming on strong and starting to close the gap. ■

Zab Judah

(Continued from page 23)

late-40s), tells a few stories of how he and Zab would often get confused for brothers rather than father and son.

"We were out in Vegas one time, and Zab knows a lot of people in the rap game," Yoel said. "They'd ask who I was, and he'd tell them, 'That's my father.' They thought he was kidding. And I have a classic when Zab was still in high school. They called me to talk to the principal for something that went on. I remember I'm sitting there with Zab, when the principal comes in the room. He looks at us, then goes back out. A few minutes later, he comes back in, looks at us, then goes back out again. Finally, the guy comes in fum-

ing, 'Zab, where's your father?' Zab said, 'He's been right here,' pointing to me. The principal just laughed and apologized. He thought I was Zab's older brother."

Yoel Judah was a kickboxing champion in his youth. That was his first love. Young Zab would always tag along, seated at ringside, throwing punches in the air, trying to imitate his father. Before boxing was even a consideration, Yoel says, it was karate that gripped Zab's attention. If a Bruce Lee movie was on, Zab would sit glued to the TV.

"We try to use martial arts techniques in the boxing ring," Yoel said. "I've always taught Zab to play guys off with their punches. We went over 100 different ways to trap a guy in the ring, how to bait an opponent to come to you. It all comes from karate. In fact, we have a little saying. I'll start off by saying 'Karate man,' and Zab finishes it with 'Feels no pain.'"

Before the Bergman victory, a number of boxing pundits already viewed Judah, 22-0 (17) with 1 no-contest, as an uncrowned champion, with time and opportunity the only hindrances separating him from a world title belt. Many compare his quickness and speed to four-division former champion Pernell Whitaker, whose larger-than-life image is posted throughout the Judah dining room. The biggest question, however, was how Judah would react to adversity in a championship fight—and the jury is still out on just how well Judah will respond against a truly dangerous opponent.

In four years as a pro, no one has really threatened Judah. There was a 12-round decision over the tough but outclassed Mickey Ward in June 1998, and Darryl Tyson extended him to 11 rounds later that year, before Judah finally scored a knockout. But other than that, Bergman was the most experienced opponent Judah had faced.

Judah responded well to the concern about handling adversity against Bergman, getting up after being caught with a textbook left hook midway through the second round. Until then, Judah had been dominating. He knocked Bergman, 38-3 (29), down twice in the first round, causing the Judah faithful at ringside to believe their man was headed for an easy night. That's when the 22-year-old got careless. He began to showboat and prance, leaving himself vulnerable. The result of Judah's recklessness was a left that caught him by surprise, sending him crashing down on his backside.

Yoel would like to see Zab cut down on this habit of playing too much in the ring, as he would like to correct his son's penchant for hitting opponents when they are down. In the first round of the Bergman fight, Judah took a swipe at his fallen rival after the second knockdown. He looked as if he would hit Bergman again—and risk disqualification—in the fourth when he floored Bergman for the final time, but referee Steve Smoger grabbed Judah quickly enough to prevent that potentially disastrous blunder from happening.

"That's my only complaint—Zab plays too much in the ring," his father admits. "Sometimes, Zab could be his own worst enemy in the ring. He lets his emotions get the better of him. But I know he's all right when he starts smiling. I know he's ready to go then. You noticed in the Bergman fight, he got knocked down, and the first thing he did when he got up was smile. That's a sign to me he's all right. I've always taught my kids boxing is fun. That's why Zab is always smiling, because he's doing something he likes. We get serious in training camp. That's not fun and not meant to be fun. The actual fights are fun, that's why he's happy and smiling."

There is a purity to Zab Judah. Catch him at any boxing match with his "Boxing Posse," which includes brothers Daniel, 23, a super middleweight with a 3-0 pro record, Josiah, 20, an amateur junior middleweight, and Mikey, 15, who fights in the amateurs at 135, and chances are you'll come across a gleaming face. It's an environment he sincerely enjoys, as opposed to many pro fighters who would not be caught dead at ringside unless they were getting paid to do commentary.

This honest taste for boxing comes from Zab's youth. The Judah boys would constantly follow their father to the gym, and do things off on the side, trying to get their father's attention while he worked out. Though Zab was just six years old, people at the gym would report back to Yoel what Zab was doing, how impressive he looked hitting the speedbag, how fast his hands were. But Yoel wanted to keep his distance. Boxing was something the boys would have to pick up on their own. He was just there to present them with an opportunity, not to force boxing or karate down their throats.

"My father never really pushed it on us," Zab said. "I just wanted to show my father I wanted to box. I had to do that by just being in the gym. I love it. I really love boxing; I always have. I guess I like it because I felt I was such a natural at it. It's always been that way. I was never forced to do anything. As a matter of fact, my father used to stop us from doing it. If our grades weren't good, or we did something wrong, that was it, no boxing. It was hard, because it was a family thing. We were all together doing it."

Judah's next step is anyone's guess. He is scheduled to make his first title defense on the undercard of the Mike Tyson-Lou Savarese show in Milan, Italy, on May 20, though the opponent had not been named as of press time. Yoel wants his son to make a few title defenses, then stir up some hype for a possible showdown with WBC super lightweight champ Kostya Tszyu, who crushed Ahmed Santos in eight rounds on the same card on which Judah defeated Bergman. Yoel and Zab salivate over the prospect of facing Tszyu, WBA super lightweight champ Sharmba Mitchell, slugger Randall Bailey, or anyone else out there willing to take a chance against Zab's speed. Not to be left out is hard-hitting Terronn Millett, who was stripped of the IBF junior welter title when he was unable to defend in a timely manner due to an injury, clearing the way for Judah to become champion.

"I have no problems facing any of them," Zab said confidently. "Bring them all on, and I'll take them one at a time." Then Yoel butted in, adding, "I train Zab for straight punchers like Tszyu. Now don't get me wrong, we respect Tszyu, but he's a straight puncher, He's powerful, but he's not as fast as Zab. Sharmba Mitchell, we'd need an awfully powerful motorbike to keep up with him. Bailey, Mitchell, Millett, bring them all on. Millett and Bailey both move like robots."

Yoel maintains that the only reason Zab's resume is filled with a mostly dubious list of names is because they haven't been able to find better opposition willing to face him. Hopefully, winning the title will swing the door open wider for a higher class of opposition. Yoel says the

best in his son is yet to come.

"Once Zab is in shape, then I work on him mentally," Yoel said. "Once he's like that, in that state of mind, he's hard to beat."

Zab looked at his father, then took a look around at all the trophies and victory shots spread throughout their spacious, single Brooklyn home. He nodded because he knew he couldn't have achieved what he has without his father.

"We're close; we're like best friends," Zab said. "We do everything together. My goal is for us to be the best father-son team ever in boxing. I know Shane Mosley is close to his dad; they're good people. But I think what I have with my father is special." ■

Oscar De La Hoya

(Continued from page 26)

porters. But it remains to be seen if the chameleon-like Golden Boy will stick to his macho style against more dangerous opposition. He claims that the loss to Trinidad was a "blessing in disguise," and that it "changed my whole outlook." He also maintained that he'd "trained to box [Trinidad], not to exchanges punches."

"Part of me wanted to go in there and fight him because I felt he had nothing," said De La Hoya of his lone pro defeat. "But in the back of my mind, I was worried about going the distance if I didn't knock him out."

While stopping short of assigning blame for the Trinidad debacle to anyone but himself, De La Hoya did say that there was "confusion" in his corner, too many voices telling him what to do as he gave away the fight by running during the championship rounds. Still, somebody had to be the scapegoat, and that somebody turned out to be Hall of Fame trainer Gil Clancy, who was ousted from De La Hoya's corner prior to the Coley fight. The absence of Clancy certainly didn't hamper De La Hoya's performance at the Garden, and it probably won't make much of a difference in the future, but his dismissal is certainly indicative of the revolving-door policy the fighter has had with trainers throughout his career. Robert Alcazar, who began working with De La Hoya when he was still an amateur, has survived the many shifts in personnel, but his lengthy tenure probably has more to do with the fact that he's tight with Joel De La Hoya Sr., the family patriarch and power behind the throne, than his skills as a teacher or tactician.

The seemingly endless changes in trainers and fighting philosophies have undoubtedly retarded De La Hoya's growth as a fighter. Even so, when Coley tagged him in the fourth, he responded instinctively by fighting back, which adds credence to his insistence that he is a brawler at heart. The problem is that De La Hoya and his various trainers have tinkered with his natural style to such a degree, he may never be able to find the old groove again. Against Coley, he looked, at times, like a boxer trying to imitate a slugger, and a simulated slugger isn't going to get the job done against Mosley.

Unlike De La Hoya, there has been a consistency in the way Mosley operates both in training camp and inside the ring on fight night. His father/trainer Jack Mosley coined the phrase "power-boxing" to describe his son's style, and Sugar Shane seldom deviates from what his dad has taught him. So far, that style has carried him to 34 consecutive pro victories, 32 of them via knockout, and he's not about to abandon such a successful formula in the biggest fight of his career.

So what are De La Hoya's chances of making Mosley his second kayo victim of the year? To start, we shouldn't pay too much attention to Mosley's decision victory over De La Hoya as an amateur. Both were kids back then, and a three-round amateur bout that went to the cards doesn't really have much bearing on what will happen when they clash again in June. But De La Hoya's approach to the fight, both mentally and tactically, could have a substantial effect on the outcome.

In most of his bouts, Mosley has been the aggressor, basically because his opponents were outclassed. Nonetheless, on the rare occasion when an adversary took the fight to him—his pair of fifth-round knockouts of Wilfrido Ruiz and Eduardo Morales in '98, for example—Mosley has been even more dazzling than when he's obliged to be the pursuer. Therefore, he'll be delighted if De La Hoya goes after him

(Continued on page 76)

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Oscar De La Hoya

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in the rash manner he went after Coley.

Of course, where The Golden Boy is concerned, you never know quite what to expect. He could easily renege on his promise and try to outbox Mosley. But if De La Hoya attempts to fulfill his pledge and launches an all-out onslaught for the second start in a row, we are practically guaranteed a great fight. And even if it backfires and leads to De La Hoya's second defeat, at least he'll be able to say that he went down swinging, which is a helluva lot better than whining about losing a close decision that you virtually gave away. But if Oscar is the warrior he claims to be, he should have known that all along. ■

Marco Antonio Barrera

(Continued from page 47)

how construed a score of 115-112 for Morales, who also won on the scorecard of Carol Castellano by a more plausible 114-113. Duane Ford saw it 114-113 Barrera, and THE RING favored him as well, 115-113. What nobody challenged was the notion that what we had witnessed was one of the great fights, irrespective of how the subjective process of assessment left a residual feeling of injustice.

Perhaps the breathtaking drama put an end to the fallacy that recent high-profile bad decisions are ushering the sport toward crisis point. The most self-destructive aspect of Lennox Lewis' drawn encounter with Evander Holyfield and Oscar De La Hoya's loss to Felix Trinidad was not the interpretation of faceless judges, suspect as it may have been in both cases. It was the abject failure of either fight to deliver anything remotely approaching what could justifiably have been anticipated, which did most, and does most, to alienate those who love to watch. Those who diagnose boxing's direst illness as "bad decision syndrome" are in danger of degenerating into stethoscope wearers who go "Quack."

Morales-Barrera was the cure to the most serious of boxing's ills. How often are two prime, evenly matched fighters prepared to reach such levels of performance that they outdo the hype? Not very. Sure the decision two of the three judges came to was wrong (though this was one occasion when even the dreaded draw might have been palatable, so endearing were the qualities demonstrated by both men). But the overriding feeling remained one of wondrous awe, not of being short-changed. Barrera had a right to feel cheated, but the fans did not. And even Barrera arrived at the consoling conclusion that the majority of us have made up our own minds anyway, independent of the decision handed down by Shirley, Ford, and Castellano.

"That does warm me. People realize now that I am a good fighter, whatever they may have thought after Jones stopped me and was then gifted a decision," he said. "Morales is the one now moving out of the division and away from a rematch, not me. I pressed, I hurt him, and I beat him. There is nothing else to say."

Barrera spoke briefly about future plans that involve a fight in London or Vegas next, followed possibly by an encounter with either Johnny Tapia or Naseem Hamed before the year is out. What is certain, as he took his leave to vacation with friends in Miami and Cuba, is that before February was out, we had seen the Fight of the Year and many a year. If not, start reaching for the heart tablets. ■

Brian Doogan is THE RING'S European correspondent.

Matchmaker

(Continued from page 51)

without knowing Fletcher was continually calling his name, phoned the office and asked to fight Fletcher. Match made, with an assist to Fletcher manager Lee Holiday, who was very reasonable in negotiations.

Three weeks out, six fights made, all good ones on paper. No fighter has a losing record; the cumulative won-loss tally 122-10. Too good to be true, I say knowingly. I await the pull-outs. And wait two weeks.

The Friday before the show, as I'm leaving the office for a show in Connecticut, CKP Vice President Jim DiLorenzo asks the show's status. "All intact," I say. "Everything's made."

Wishful thinking. Two hours later, I check into a hotel and check my messages. Three calls, three pullouts. Manfredy's guy, Perez, out with an injured neck. The D.C. Figueroa foe—Mike Tidline—out with an injured ankle. Tidline's replacement, Quinten Williams, not available because of college exams.

To replace the D.C. pair, I match Figueroa with Juri Schell. But then Figueroa drops out because of injuries suffered in a fender-bender. Luckily, I find a replacement at the Connecticut fights to fight Schell. But Monday evening, that fighter's attorney calls to say he has overruled the trainer and isn't fighting.

As my frustration grows, I'm tempered when I finally find a guy for Olajide. But that fight doesn't happen, as Olajide's manager, leery of not having an opponent in Atlantic City, has taken a fight in Vegas instead.

As the days turn to hours before a show, matchmakers turn into MASH doctors, simply patching holes with anything available. As Philadelphia matchmaker Bert Watson once said, "It's like throwing a bunch of magnets at a refrigerator and seeing which ones stick." I spend evenings glued to the phone, taking time-outs only to visit friends at the Irish Pub and read a poetry book my girlfriend gave me (I hate poetry, but it impresses her that I read it and takes my mind off unreasonable fears that Manfredy or Fletcher will take ill).

Luckily, both main fights stay intact. Manfredy is a dream to work with. I've read the past two years about how Manfredy is a prima donna. I wonder where this garbage comes from. The first time I saw Angel fight, he sat on the ring apron after the show ended and signed autographs for 25 minutes. He's never turned down a fight for being too tough. Definitely a bad kid, Manfredy now lives in exciting Hobart, Indiana, and raises three kids with wife and high school sweetheart Yvette. The only negative thing I can say about Angel is he's a terrible driver. That legend of his 13 car accidents is no hype. He almost killed me twice in a 10-minute drive in Detroit.

For the Fletcher fight, Angel yet again re-invented himself. New trainers, revived

religious beliefs. Definitely no devil's mask.

Davis and Shufford arrive in Atlantic City in good spirits. Davis is getting married the day after the fight. "Are you nervous?" I ask him.

"Not at all," he replies. "I'm ready."

"No, I mean about getting married."

A small smile. "Yeah, a little bit."

At the weigh-in, minor problems crop up. Linton is overweight and has to sweat off one pound. His opponent, Thrasher, is, surprisingly, three pounds under the junior middleweight limit. He looks gaunt. I'm lucky he's even there at all. The previous weekend, Thrasher's girlfriend was killed in a drunk driving accident.

Peltz doesn't allow competing fighters to wear the same trunk colors, and there's a coin-flip between Lassiter and Lee to see who ditches his blue trunks. Lassiter loses and becomes visibly upset. For good reason. He's so large that his trunks are specially made, explains manager Sue Beavers. We let Lassiter wear his trunks.

New Jersey Boxing Commissioner Larry Hazzard sends Ghany across the street to the emergency room for an EKG. New Jersey is the strictest commission in the country, and Hazzard, a former high school principal, suffers no fools. When he makes announcements, everyone stops talking. Most stop moving.

Showtime: Despite bad weather, the ballroom at Bally's Park Place is full. Ghany gets thrashed by late sub Debind Thapa, a leopard-trunked lefty who fights like Naseem Hamed's twin, despite never have seen "The Prince" in action. I feel bad for manager Guzman, who took the fight with reservations.

Davis drops Shufford on his face in the second, but endures a few rough moments himself before gaining a decision. The fight's best moment is not the knockdown, but Shufford's manager's reaction to it. "Get up and fight," growls the normally lady-like and soft-spoken Jacqueline Smith, a Vegas lawyer.

Linton waltzes to a decision win over Thrasher in a fight so bad I have to bark at Linton's corner, "Tell your man to throw some punches." I can't get mad at Thrasher.

Lee beats Lassiter after four mauling rounds.

Manfredy vs. Fletcher looks good from the start. Maybe a little too good. Fletcher is getting his shots in, and I'm nervous. I see Peltz smiling. "What was wrong with Lionel Butler?" I ask, half-seriously. He laughs.

Fletcher's success is short-lived. He goes down in the second and out in the fourth. The new Angel lives, for now. Afterward, Manfredy spots fellow Puerto Rican Wilfred Benitez, the legendary three-division former champ, at ringside. At age 41, Benitez is severely brain-damaged and can't function day-to-day without help. He lives with his mother and exists on $600-a-month social security.

In private, Manfredy gives $5,000 of his $40,000 purse to Benitez. It reminded me of the most touching moment I've seen in boxing: Terry Norris, after entering the ring to fight Meldrick Taylor, walking to and kneeling in front of a cancer-riddled, wheelchair-bound Chuck Minker, touching a glove to the Nevada boxing commissioner's outstretched hand.

I think I'm damn lucky to have this job and work with such people. ■

Ken Buchanan

(Continued from page 55)

floor, I just froze. I didn't know what to do. I mean, there I was dancing with a princess. She was great, but I felt like a pauper, that's for sure."

In Canastota, Kenny, you will be made to feel like a king. And the kings of Canastota, to those who regard regal succession as one champion being deposed in a ritual laying on of hands by another, live forever. ■

Brian Doogan is THE RING's European correspondent.

New Faces

(Continued from page 62)

power in knocking down Ghany twice in the first round, then finishing off his opponent at the 50-second mark of the second.

What makes Thapa unique, other than his background, is his style. It's a hybrid of Prince Naseem Hamed and Hector Camacho. Thapa, who wears the same leopard-patterned trunks as Hamed, is all

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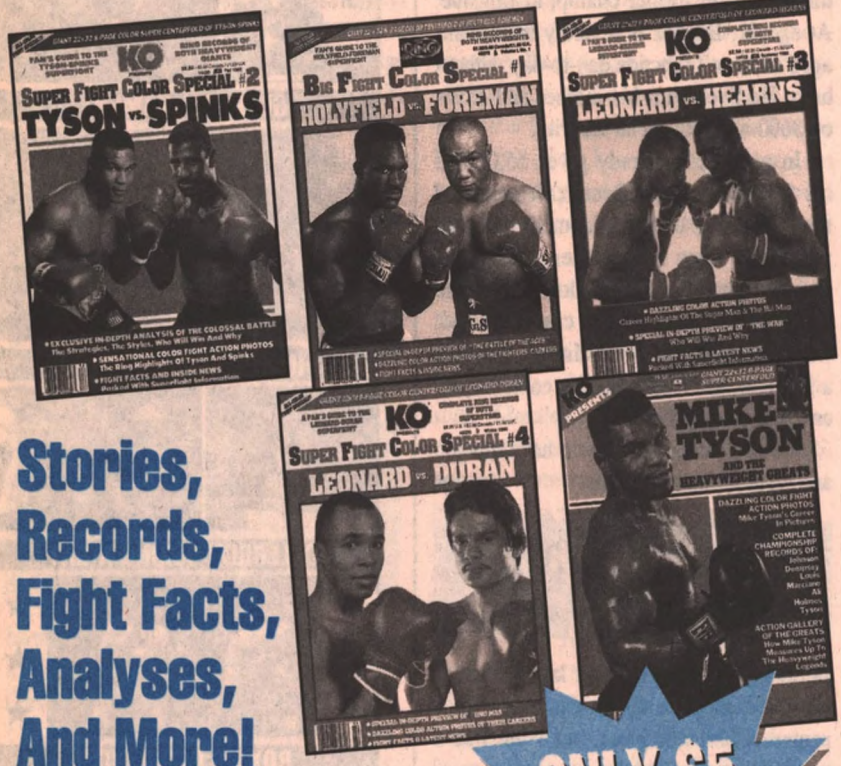

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New Faces

(Continued from page 77)

over the ring, bobbing, weaving, moving in and out. Opponents have no idea what Thapa is going to do next, because Thapa does not seem to know. He fights like a puppet with half the strings cut off. Just call him "The Himalaya Hamed."

"Thapa is a very awkward, hard guy to fight," said Teddy Atlas, *Friday Night Fights'* ringside color analyst. "He's very unorthodox, all over the place. I'd hate to prepare a guy for a fighter like him. Plus, from what I know, he has a great amateur background. In a lot of ways, he's like Prince Hamed in his early stages.

"This was a big victory for him. He beat an up-an-coming guy in Ghany on national TV. It's a big plus for him. Now he has to be navigated properly. His handlers have to find the right fights for him—if there's anyone out there willing to face him."

Eric Bottjer, Cedric Kushner's matchmaker, has seen Thapa a couple of times and usually comes away shaking his head every time he views the lean, wiry 115-pounder in action.

"Style-wise, he makes Hamed look orthodox," Bottjer said with a grin. "I've seen him a few times now, and Thapa is so unpredictable, so strong, that he's definitely someone who bears watching. Beating Ghany was a good win for him, but I don't know how good he is yet."

Thapa is a Gurkas, a member of a fierce warrior tribe noted for carrying jagged-edged knives. When the English armies failed to conquer them during the colonial era, they enlisted the Gurkas' aid in securing their interests in Asia.

Thapa grew up with the barest necessities. The fighter's village, according to his co-managers, Pat Doran and Butch Mitchell (who also trains him), is inaccessible by mechanized transportation. The way to his home, as Thapa described it, is over a series of rope bridges strung over cavernous gullies.

Mitchell probably knows Thapa, 22, the best. Thapa had sought out Mitchell when he came to the United States and settled in the Atlantic City area in 1997. On weekends, the fighter lives with

Mitchell. Thapa arrived with a solid amateur pedigree, but also a boat full of dubious tall tales.

"Debind came looking for me; he had heard about me, but I have no idea how," said Mitchell, who has also worked with junior lightweight contender John Brown. "When I first met Debind, I didn't know anything about him. I wanted to see what he had. We went from there and haven't stopped. I know everything about his background, and it's wild.

"Debind told me he grew up in the jungle part of Nepal. There was no TV, phones, electricity; they lived on dirt floors. They had nothing. Debind told me once he fought gorillas. I said, 'What? You must mean monkeys.' He said, 'No, gorillas, with butts as big as mine.' He told me he used to run 46 miles, and I questioned that. But then I would see him running on the boardwalk, and I was on my bike, trying to keep up. It's no problem for him to run 10 miles."

The language barrier is the only major hurdle Thapa has had to overcome in the United States. Well, that—and dogs and ducks.

"The first time we were running together, it was at night," Mitchell recalled with a laugh, "and Debind is running when this dog jumps out from behind these bushes. I never saw someone run so fast from a dog in my life. He told me later he thought it was a lion. That's what he was used to in Nepal. Then there was the first time he was out with me on the beach. I noticed he was throwing rocks at these ducks. I asked him what he was doing, and he told me he was hoping to hit one of the ducks and bring it home for dinner. I told him, 'No, you can't do that here. You get arrested for things like that.' It sounds farfetched, but it's the truth. We as Americans are spoiled; we have everything. A lot of people from Nepal have nothing. They live off the land."

At first, Mitchell admits, the language issue was a problem, and neither trainer nor fighter understood what the other was saying. But Thapa is a hard worker, Doran and Mitchell both point out. He's learned English on his own by watching American TV.

Though Thapa has had only 10 bouts, the longest going eight rounds, Mitchell maintains his fighter can take on any 115-pounder out there right now. He bases this on Thapa's unusual style, work ethic, and unrelenting spirit. Mitchell has made a few changes, converting Thapa, naturally lefthanded, to a conventional stance. That has enabled Thapa to fight equally well with both hands. More importantly, Mitchell believes Thapa possesses that rare innate quality all champions must have—heart.

"I just feel something on the inside of Debind, nothing a trainer can see or train, that's special," Mitchell said.

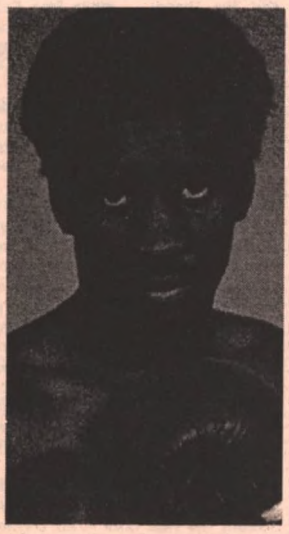
Thapa loves the sport so much, it's like a religion to him, explains Mitchell. He kisses his gloves and burns incense before fights. His goal is to win five world titles.

"Debind's in constant motion," Doran said. "That's the way he fights. But he's a lot more aggressive than a Camacho and a lot more aggressive than Hamed."

Doran also senses a maturity beyond the fighter's years.

"He just turned 22 and he has a way about himself, almost like a wisdom that is beyond 22," said the manager. "Just talking to him, you know you're not talking to a kid. He has a style of his own."

Whether that style can translate into a world title depends on a lot of factors, including how quickly Doran and Mitchell can move him up the ranks. Of course, as far as Thapa is concerned, he can't win a title soon enough. He has yet to return to Nepal, where his wife lives with their two children. In the meantime, he's quickly absorbing American culture and starting to get used to its luxuries. Even so, it's still very apparent that his background is vastly different from that of most American fighters. When asked where his strength came from, Thapa replied, "I drink my mother's milk for eight years." Imagine him saying that to Larry Merchant during a postfight interview. ■



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Oct. 1987: Greatness Beckons: When Will Mike Tyson Answer The Call? Color Pinup: Michael Olajide. Interview: Tyrell Biggs. Also: Paz-Haugen, Marvin Hagler.

Nov. 1987: Michael Spinks: The War With Tyson Is Okay With Him. Color Pinup: Vinny Pazienza. Interview: Frankie Duarte. Also: Matthew Hilton, Hagler-Czyz.

Dec. 1987: Mike Tyson: Undisputed Heavyweight King-But Is He Losing His Loyal Subjects? Color Pinup: Matthew Hilton. Interview: Barry McGuigan. Also: Aaron Pryor, Mike McCallum.

Jan. 1988: The Collapse Of A Hero: Why Breland Never Hit The Mark Of Greatness. Color Pinup: Michael Spinks. Interview: Aaron Pryor. Also: Michael Nunn, Alexis Arguello, lightweights.

Feb. 1988: Pazienza & Haugen Go For Each Other's Throats. Color Pinup: Marlon Starling. Interview: Bob Arum. Also: Tate-Olajide, ESPN Boxing.

May 1988: KO Exclusive-Mike Tyson, As Only Mike Tyson Knows Him. Color Pinup: Mike McCallum. Interview: Thomas Hearns. Also: Tyson-Spinks Poll, Michael Dokes, Virgil Hill.

July 1988: Superfight History Dictates: Don't Expect The Expected From Tyson-Spinks. Color Pinup: Roger Mayweather. Interview: Dr. Ferdie Pacheco. Also: Roberto Duran, Azumah Nelson, Barkley-Olajide.

Aug. 1988: Tyson-Spinks: KO's Fearless Forecast Of Superfight '88. Color Pinup: Buddy McGirt. Interview: Matthew Hilton. Also: Lockridge-Knight, Evander Holyfield, Lloyd Honeyghan.

Sept. 1988: Tyson-Spinks, The Aftermath—What If Tyson Wins; What If Spinks Wins? Color Pinup: Frank Tate. Interview: Marlon Starling. Also: Barry McGuigan, Simon Brown, risk-taking.

Oct. 1988: Middleweight Terrorism: Iran Bombs The Hit Man. Color Pinup: Don Lalonde. Interview: Frank Bruno. Also: Roger Mayweather, Marvin Hagler.

Jan. 1989: The Troubled Times Of Mike Tyson. Color Pinup: Lloyd Honeyghan. Interview: Gil Clancy. Also: Meldrick Taylor, Jeff Fenech, Boxing's Champs.

Feb. 1989: George Foreman Is Born Again. Color Pinup: Meldrick Taylor. Interview: Bill Cayton. Also: The Olympics, Davey Hilton, John Mugabi, Barry McGuigan.

Sept. 1989: "I Beat Up Tyson Before, I'll Do It Again," by Carl Williams. Color Pinup: Michael Nunn. Also: Chavez-Mayweather, Brian Mitchell, Marv Albert.

Nov. 1989: The Real Duran; The Stories Behind The Legend. Color Pinup: Orlando Canizales. Interview: Mike Trainer. Also: Edwin Rosario, Rosi-Van Horn.

Feb. 1990: George Foreman Risks A Multimillion-Dollar Shot At Tyson. Color Pinup: Brian Mitchell. Interview: Riddick Bowe. Also: Simon Brown, Molina-Lopez, East vs. West.

May 1990: Chavez vs. Taylor: The Best Matchup In The Last Five Years. Color Pinup: Daniel Zaragoza. Interview: Pernell Whitaker. Also: Leonard-Hearns, Glenn McCrory, Prince Charles Williams.

June 1990: A Sugar-Free Future? Thomas Hearns Is Looking Up. Color Pinup: Glenn McCrory. Interview: Michael Moorer. Also: Matthew Hilton, Molina-Suarez, Foreman-Cooney, Camacho-Paz.

July 1990: KO Interview-Sugar Ray Leonard. Color Pinup: Jorge Paez. Also: Michael Nunn, Buster Douglas, Jibaro Perez, the Olympians.

Aug. 1990: Meldrick Taylor: Brilliance In Defeat. Color Pinup: Buster Douglas. Interview: Teddy Atlas. Also: Buddy McGirt, Dokes-Ruddock, Simon Brown.

Sept. 1990: KO Interview-Buster Douglas. Color Pinup: Macho Camacho. Also: Thomas Hearns, Nigel Benn, Greg Haugen, Boxing Hall of Fame.

Oct. 1990: Send In The Clown: Is Jorge Paez A Phenom Or A Fraud? Color Pinup: Paul Banke. Interview: Tony Lopez. Also: Chavez-Taylor II, Jesse Benavides.

Nov. 1990: The Comeback Of Mike Tyson: A Crooked Course Straight To The Top. Color Pinup: Tony Lopez. Interview: Don Dunphy. Also: Davis-Breland, Riddick Bowe, federal commission.

Dec. 1990: The Heart Of The Matter: Who Will Survive The Holyfield-Douglas War? Color Pinup: Terry Norris. Interview: Virgil Hill. Also: Michael Carbajal, Ruelas Brothers, Best Fighter Poll.

Jan. 1991: Macho Ado About Nothing? Why Hector Camacho Wants To Be Believed. Color Pinup: Meldrick Taylor. Interview: Irving Rudd. Also: Sugar Ray Leonard, Orlando Canizales, Vinny Pazienza.

Feb. 1991: 10 Fighters To Fear: Boxing's Most Destructive Hitters. Color Pinup: Razor Ruddock. Interview: Ray Mercer. Also: Roberto Duran, Saoul Mamby, Mills Lane, Sugar Ray Robinson.

May 1991: Ruddock Eyes The Big Upset Of Tyson. Color Pinup: Luisito Espinosa. Interview: Jeff Fenech. Also: Virgil Hill, Pernell Whitaker, Alex Ramos, Simon Brown, Buddy McGirt.

June 1991: Exclusive KO Interview: Evander Holyfield. Color Pinup: Raul Perez. Also: Norris-Leonard, Charles Williams, champs of 1971 vs. 1991, Chavez.

July 1991: Riddick Bowe: Is He Destined To Be Heavyweight Champ? Color Pinup: Michael Carbajal. Interview: Buddy McGirt. Also: Bobby Czyz, Buster Douglas, Mark Breland.

Aug. 1991: Desert Storm II: Will The Tyson-Ruddock Rematch Be Different? Color Pinup: Loreto Garza. Interview: Michael Carbajal. Also: Brown-Blocker, Fenech-Nelson preview, Harold Brazier, Yuh-Carbajal.

Sept. 1991: Remember Me? I Won The Fight! What "The Real Deal" Still Has To Deal With. Color Pinup: Ray Mercer. Interview: Eddie Futch. Also: Larry Holmes, southpaw heavyweights, Toney-Nunn, Brown-Taylor.

Oct. 1991: Thomas Hearns Works Another Miracle! Now There Are More Hills Left To Climb. Color Pinup: Humberto Gonzalez. Interview: Mike McCallum. Also: Norris-Curry, Richard Steele, Troy Dorsey.

Nov. 1991: Mike Tyson-The Only Heavyweight That Matters. Color Pinup: Thomas Hearns. Interview: Troy Dorsey. Also: Fenech-Nelson, James Toney, lost art of bodypunching.

Dec. 1991: Tyson vs. Holyfield-The Experts Analyze The Elements That Will Decide The Fight. Color Pinup: Joey Gamache. Also: Michael Moorer, Pernell Whitaker, Greg Richardson, Robert Quiroga.

Jan. 1992: The Tyson-Holyfield Showdown: An Exclusive Forecast By George Foreman. Color Pinup: Myung Woo Yuh. Also: Fenech-Nelson, TV announcers, boxing's toughest men, Toney-McCallum.

March 1992: KO Interview Mike Tyson: An In-Depth, Toe-To-Toe Talk With Boxing's Biggest Star. Color Pinup: Michael Moorer. Also: Thomas Hearns, Tracy Patterson, Larry Holmes, best fighter poll.

May 1992: Division-By-Division Faceoffs: The Best Of '92 vs. The Best Of '67. Color Pinup: James Warring. Interview: Hector Camacho. Also: Tommy Morrison, Bert Cooper, Gianfranco Rosi.

June 1992: If Not Tyson Or Holyfield, Then Who? Bowe? Moorer? Ruddock? Lewis? Mercer? Color Pinup: James Toney. Interview: Shelly Finkel. Also: Scotty Olson, overrated and underrated fighters, Orlin Norris, Whitaker-Pineda.

July 1992: The Title Reign of Evander Holyfield: A Reason To Hide ... Or A Reason For Pride? Color Pinup: Buddy McGirt. Interview: Julian Jackson. Also: Kelley-Dorsey, Nelson-Fenech, Kennedy McKinney.

Aug. 1992: Bowe Knows The Big Fight: The Top Contender Analyzes Holmes-Holyfield. Color Pinup: Julian Jackson. Interview: Michael Spinks. Also: Thomas Hearns, Blue Horizon, fighting fear, Toney-Barkley, Greg Haugen.

Sept. 1992: Can Tommy Morrison Punch Out The Theory ... White Men Can't Fight. Color Pinup: Welcome Ncita. Interview: Ken Norton. Also: Reggie Johnson, Jimmy Paul, McGirt-Blocker, Ali-Shavers.

Oct. 1992: The Olympics: Golden Memories ... And Golden Futures? Color Pinup: Reggie Johnson. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Genaro Hernandez, Terry Norris.

Nov. 1992: Foreman vs. Holmes: The Fight Evander Holyfield Should Have Prevented. Color Pinup: Iran Barkley. Interview: Joey Gamache. Also: Hector Camacho, Tracy Patterson, Rudy Zavala.

Dec. 1992: The Final Four: Ruddock vs. Lewis, Holyfield vs. Bowe. Color Pinup: Genaro Hernandez. Interview: Lennox Lewis. Also: Whitaker-Pineda, Bowe-Coetzer, Alex Stewart, Gamache-Lopez.

Jan. 1993: Holyfield vs. Bowe: Who Will Win and Why. Color Pinup: Al Cole. Interview: Vinny Pazienza. Also: James Toney, Terrence Alli, Maurice Blocker.

March 1993: Not Just Another English Muffin: Lennox Lewis Powers His Way Toward The Title. Color Pinup: Leeonzer Barber. Interview: Emanuel Steward. Also: Reggie Johnson, Lopez-Gamache, USA Network.

May 1993: Recapping The Future: Julio

Cesar Chavez' Road To 100-0. Color Pinup: Terry Norris. Interview: Junior Jones. Also: Buddy McGirt, Riddick Bowe, Raul Marquez.

Dec. 1993: The KO Feud Rages On: "I Will Torture You!" Says Riddick Bowe To Lennox Lewis. Color Pinup: Kennedy McKinney. Also: Mississippi boxing, George Foreman, Yori Boy Campas , Carbajal-Kim, Morrison-Moorer.

Jan. 1994: Outrage At The Alamodome: "Sweet Pea" Shafted! Color Pinup: Orlando Canizales. Interview: Kennedy McKinney. Also: James Toney, book of lists, M.A. Barrera.

July 1994: The Upset Epidemic! Carbajal's Conqueror: Chiquita Gonzalez. Color Pinup: Junior Jones. Interview: Rafael Ruelas. Also: Jake Rodriguez, Czyz-Hearns preview, Randall-Chavez II preview.

June 1995: The Tug-Of-War Over Mike Tyson. Color Pinup: Wilfredo Vasquez. Interview: Oliver McCall. Plus: Alejandro Gonzalez, Alexis Arguello, Kostya Tszyu.

March 1996: Whether He Fights Or Not ... Tyson Is Hot! Hot!! Hot!!! Color Pinup: Marco Antonio Barrera. Interview: Jose Sulaiman. Plus: Reggie Tuur, heavyweight prospects, champion's edge.

June 1996: Destined For The Hall Of Fame: Who's In, Who's Out. Color Pinup: Wayne McCullough. Interview: Cedric Kushner. Plus: Danny Romero, Mark Breland, Dynamite Dozen—the next 12.

July 1996: Awesome Again! Tyson Destroys Bruno. Color Pinup: Tyson-Bruno. Interview: Christy Martin. Plus: Chavez-De La Hoya preview, Derrick Gainer, '96 Hall of Fame inductees.

Sept. 1996: Tyson vs. Seldon. Don't Bet On This Fight Until You've Read This Story! Color Pinup: Arturo Gatti. Interview: Butterbean. Plus: Dana Rosenblatt, '92 Olympians, McGuigan-Pedroza.

Nov. 1996 (Special 88-Page Edition): The *KO* 100. Color Pinup: Terry Norris. Interview: Bob Arum. Plus: Roy Jones, Roberto Duran, Joe Cortez.

Dec. 1996: Andrew Golota—Taking The Low Road to Stardom. Color Pinup: Mark Johnson. Interview: Rock Newman. Plus: De La Hoya-Gonzalez, Chuck Bodak, bizarre endings, Chavez-Rosario.

Winter 1996: This Is War! Holyfield-Tyson Will Be Explosive ... And Short. Color Pinup: Roy Jones. Interview: Bernard Hopkins. Plus: Riddick Bowe, David Reid, Holyfield-Qawi.

Jan. 1997 (Special 88-Page Edition): Bowe-Golota II: Hatred And Vengeance ... It's A Beautiful Thing! Color Pinup: Johnny Tapia. Interview: Lou Duva. Plus: Mouse Strauss, heavyweight rematches, Azumah Nelson.

Feb. 1997: KO's 1997 Wish List. Color Pinup: Ike Quartey. Interview: Naseem Hamed. Plus: David Tua, Felix Trinidad, Adolpho Washington, Bobby Czyz.

March 1997: Holyfield's Trainer Tells All! An Inside Look At The Upset Of The Year. Color Pinup: Vinny Pazienza. Interview: Sugar Ray Leonard. Plus: George Foreman, Lupe Pintor, boxing bill, Floyd Mayweather Jr.

Aug. 1997: Oscar Reaches ... But Can't Grasp The Stars. Color Pinup: Nate Miller. Interview: Hector Camacho. Plus: Norris-Trinidad preview, Hall of Fame, Angel Manfredy.

Sept. 1997: A Legitimate Grudge Match! Why Romero-Tapia Could Be The Fight Of The Year. Color Pinup: Oscar De La Hoya. Interview: David Tua. Plus: Ike Quartey, George Foreman, top promoters.

Nov. 1997: Filling In The Missing Pieces: What "The Bite" Means To Boxing. Color Pinup: Christy Martin. Interview: Jim Lampley. Plus; Vince Phillips, British prospects, Iran Barkley.

Dec. 1997: Johnny Tapia Outshines Danny Romero: The Defining Moment In A "Crazy Life." Color Pinup: Genaro Hernandez. Interview: Frans Botha. Plus: Lewis-Akiwande, Don King, Charles Brewer.

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Jan. 1998: De La Hoya Humbles The Macho Man: "Oscar's The Best I've Ever Fought." Color Pinup: William Guthrie. Interview: Mark Johnson. Plus: Johnny Tapia, Pinklon Thomas, defense.

Feb. 1998: Is Lennox Lewis The World's Best Heavyweight? Color Pinup: Charles Brewer. Interview: Marc Ratner. Plus: Otis Grant, Arturo Gatti.

March 1998: Evander Holyfield: For The Real Deal, Lewis Is No Big Deal. Color Pinup: Lou Del Valle. Interview: Lennox Lewis. Plus: David Izon, Meldrick Taylor, rapid weight loss.

May 1998: Living Up To The Hype: Sometimes They Do ... Sometimes They Don't. Color Pinup: David Reid. Interview: Best Of ... (Part III). Plus: Naseem Hamed, Marty Denkin, women's boxing.

June 1998: Lewis vs. Holyfield: Why The Fight Of The Year Isn't Going To Happen. Color Pinup: Evander Holyfield. Interview: Eddie Futch. Plus: Hector Lizarraga, pain, Head-To-Head review.

Aug. 1998: Lewis Bombs Out Briggs: Would The WBC Champ Do This To Holyfield? Color Pinup: Keith Mullings. Interview: Shane Mosley. Plus: Pernell Whitaker, Marco Antonio Barrera, Roberto Garcia.

Sept. 1998: Can Mike Tyson Make A Successful Comeback? Sugar Ray Leonard Has The Answer. Color Pinup: Michael Grant. Interview: Brad Jacobs. Plus: Naseem Hamed, Wayne McCullough, Kirk Johnson.

Oct. 1998: The Ultimate Fantasy Card. Color Pinup: Oscar De La Hoya. Interview: Roy Jones. Plus: Brendan Ingle, NYPD boxing, prospect blueprint.

Nov. 1998 The *KO* 100. Color Pinup: Reggie Johnson. Interview: Tim Austin. Plus: Cesar Bazan, Spencer Oliver, Bobby Czyz.

Dec. 1998: Winning Fights Is Easier Than Winning Fans: Why Can't We Appreciate Roy Jones? Color Pinup: Tim Austin. Interview: Michael Grant. Plus: Christy Martin, Ali Reform Act, one-hit wonders.

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May 1999: The Tyson Of Old ... Or Just An Old Tyson? Color Pinup: Luisito Espinosa. Interview: Fernando Vargas. Plus: Antonio Diaz, Sumya Anani, standing eight-count.

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Sept. 1999: Mayeather vs. Mosley: Who's The Future Of Boxing? Color Pinup: James Page. Interview: J Russell Peltz. Plus: Evander Holyfield, Thomas Hearns, Angel Manfredy.

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Nov. 1999: De La Hoya vs. Trinidad: "It's Gonna Come Down To Who The Hell Wants It Most!" Color Pinup: David Reid. Interview: Arturo Gatti. Plus: Roy Jones, Sugar Shane Mosley, Vassily Jirov.

Dec. 1999: David Reid & Fernando Vargas: Olympic Teammates On A Collision Course! Color Pinup: Zab Judah. Interview: Ike Ibeabuchi. Plus: Vitaly Klitschko, Antonio Tarver, Mike Tyson.

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Jan. 2000: Fool's Gold? Trinidad May Have Tarnished Oscar's Image Forever! Color Pinup: Paulie Ayala. Interview: Tony Ayala Jr. Plus: David Reid, Johnny Nelson.

Feb. 2000: Breakout 2000: Who's Going To Lead The Way In Y2K? Color Pinup: Roy Jones. Interview: Bob Arum. Plus: Shane Mosley, Wise-Chavez, Iran Barkley.

March 2000: Mike Tyson: "I'm Tired Of This Crap!" So Are We, Mike! Color Pinup: Vernon Forrest. Interview: James Page. Plus: Erik Morales & Naseem Hamed, Diego Corrales, women's boxing.

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❑ OCT/83	❑ AUG/88	❑ SEP/91	❑ JUL/96	❑ DEC/98
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❑ MAR/85	❑ NOV/89	❑ MAY/92	❑ FEB/97	❑ JUN/99
❑ MAY/85	❑ FEB/90	❑ JUN/92	❑ MAR/97	❑ JUL/99
❑ JUL/85	❑ MAY/90	❑ JUL/92	❑ AUG/97	❑ AUG/99
❑ AUG/85	❑ JUN/90	❑ AUG/92	❑ SEP/97	❑ SEP/99
❑ DEC/85	❑ JUL/90	❑ SEP/92	❑ NOV/97	❑ OCT/99
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❑ JUL/86	❑ SEP/90	❑ NOV/92	❑ HOL/97	❑ DEC/99
❑ FEB/87	❑ OCT/90	❑ DEC/92	❑ JAN/98	❑ HOL/99
❑ SEP/87	❑ NOV/90	❑ JAN/93	❑ FEB/98	❑ JAN/00
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WORLDWIDE RATINGS

The ratings of the three major governing bodies recognized by The Ring are supplied by the organizations themselves. They are updated on these pages as soon as they are made available to us. In this issue, the WBA ratings were complied as of February 2000, the WBC as of March 2000, and the IBF as of February 2000.

HEAVYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Lennox Lewis (GB)	C	C	C
John Ruiz (USA)	1	1	4
Michael Grant (USA)	2	5	2
Evander Holyfield (USA)	3	2	3
Mike Tyson (USA)	4	4	–
Wladimir Klitchko (UKR)	5	3	12
David Tua (NZ)	6	6	1
Larry Donald (USA)	7	8	5
Henry Akinwande (GB)	8	9	9
Kirk Johnson (CAN)	9	–	–
Andrew Golota (POL)	10	–	–
Oleg Maskaev (UKR)	13	7	10
Kirk Johnson (CAN)	–	10	8
Danell Nicholson (USA)	–	–	6
Chris Byrd (USA)	17	–	7

CRUISERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Juan Carlos Gomez (CUBA)	C	–	–
Fabrice Tiozzo (FRA)	–	C	–
Vassiliy Jirov (KAZ)	–	–	C
James Toney (USA)	1	4	5
Marcelo Dominguez (ARG)	2	–	6
Alex Gonzalez (PR)	3	8	–
Torsten May (GER)	4	10	2
Joe Siluvangi (FRA)	5	–	–
Virgil Hill (USA)	6	1	7
Wayne Braithwaite (GUY)	7	–	12
Imamu Mayfield (USA)	8	5	9
Lou Del Valle (USA)	9	–	–
Louis Azille (DR)	10	–	–
Valery Vikhor (LAT)	–	2	–
Alexander Gurov (UKR)	–	3	–
Akim Tafer (FRA)	–	6	–
Saul Montana (MEX)	–	7	8
Andre Purlette (GUY)	–	9	4
Alex Gonzales (USA)	–	–	1
Arthur Williams (USA)	17	11	3
Carl Thompson (GB)	15	–	10

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Roy Jones (USA)	C	C	C
Michael Nunn (USA)	1	9	–
Clinton Woods (GB)	2	12	9
Eric Harding (USA)	3	5	2
Reggie Johnson (USA)	4	–	5
Yawe Davis (ITA)	5	–	–
Antonio Tarver (USA)	6	–	1
David Telesco (USA)	7	6	8
Greg Wright (USA)	8	–	–
Thomas Ulrich (GER)	9	–	–
Glenn Kelly (AUSTRL)	10	7	3
Richard Hall (USA)	–	1	–
Lou Del Valle (USA)	–	2	11
Frank Liles (USA)	–	3	–
Derrick Harmon (USA)	11	4	–
Timo Masua (NZ)	–	8	–
Jorge Castro (ARG)	15	10	–
Muhammad Siluvangi (ZAI)	–	–	4
Billy Lewis (USA)	29	11	6
Jimmy Crawford (USA)	–	–	7
Fred Moore (USA)	21	–	10

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Markus Beyer (GER)	C	–	–
Byron Mitchell (USA)	–	C	–
Sven Ottke (GER)	–	–	C
Glenn Catley (GB)	1	7	–
David Starie (GB)	2	10	–
Eric Lucas (CAN)	3	–	–
Richie Woodhall (GB)	4	–	–
Mario Velt (GER)	5	3	8
Omar Sheika (USA)	6	–	7
Dana Rosenblatt (USA)	7	–	–
Charles Brewer (USA)	8	6	1
Andrei Shkalikov (RUS)	9	2	–
Stephane Ouellet (CAN)	10	–	–
Bruno Girard (FRA)	–	1	5
Manuel Siacca (PR)	–	4	–
Mike Makata (NZ)	–	5	–
Fredric Alvarez (SWE)	20	8	12
Mads Larsen (DEN)	11	9	–
James Butler (USA)	27	–	2
Syd Vanderpool (CAN)	–	–	3
Guillermo Jones (PAN)	–	–	4
Tocker Pudwill (USA)	–	–	6
Lloyd Bryant (USA)	–	–	9
Guy Waters (AUSTRL)	25	–	10

MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Keith Holmes (USA)	C	–	–
William Joppy (USA)	–	C	–
Bernard Hopkins (USA)	–	–	C
Robert McCracken (GB)	1	11	–
Hassine Cherifi (FRA)	2	–	9
Kevin Palmer (USA)	3	–	–
Erland Betare (FRA)	4	–	–
Davide Ciarlante (ITA)	5	–	11
Howard Eastman (GB)	6	2	10
Lonnie Bradley (USA)	7	–	–
Johnson Tshuma (ZIM)	8	10	12
Ali Ennebati (FRA)	9	–	8
Davey Hilton (CAN)	10	12	4
Rito Ruvalcaba (MEX)	–	1	7
Guillermo Jones (PAN)	12	3	–
Ramon Moyano (ARG)	18	4	–
Dana Rosenblatt (USA)	–	5	5
Winky Wright (USA)	–	6	–
Julio Cesar Green (DR)	–	7	–
Darren Obah (AUSTRL)	–	8	–
Antwun Echols (USA)	11	9	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Antwun Echols (USA)	–	–	2
Brian Barbosa (USA)	15	–	3
Carl Daniels (USA)	–	–	6

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Francisco Castillejo (SPA)	C	–	–
David Reid (USA)	–	C	–
Fernando Vargas (USA)	–	–	C
Tony Marshall (USA)	1	–	–
Mamadou Thiam (FRA)	2	1	–
Roman Karmazin (RUS)	3	5	10
Anthony Jones (USA)	4	7	11
Tony Badea (ROM)	5	–	–
Alfred Ankamah (GHA)	6	–	–
Kevin Kelly (USA)	7	4	–
Akira Ohigashi (JAP)	8	12	–
Carl Daniels (USA)	9	11	–
Paul Vaden (USA)	10	–	2
Laurent Boudouani (FRA)	–	2	–
Jose Flores (MEX)	–	3	–
Marcos Avendano (VEN)	–	6	–
Rodney Jones (USA)	–	8	–
Jose Luis Lopez (MEX)	–	9	–
Emmett Linton (USA)	–	10	5
Ross Thompson (USA)	26	–	1
Winky Wright (USA)	–	–	3
Bronco McKart (USA)	13	–	4
Ike Quartey (GHA)	–	–	6
Pat Coleman (USA)	–	–	7
Marshall Simpson (GUY)	–	–	8
Yory Boy Campas (MEX)	17	–	9

WELTERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Felix Trinidad (PR)	C	–	C
James Page (USA)	–	C	–
Oscar De La Hoya (USA)	1	1	–
Shane Mosley (USA)	2	4	2
Shannan Taylor (AUSTRL)	3	6	5
Vernon Forrest (USA)	4	7	3
Derrell Coley (USA)	5	–	–
Nicolas Cervera (COL)	6	12	–
Kofi Jantuah (GHA)	7	–	–
Carlos Baldomir (ARG)	8	11	–
Andrei Pestraiev (RUS)	9	3	–
Thomas Damgaard (DEN)	10	–	–
Andrew Lewis (GUY)	22	2	10
Michael Trabant (GERE)	23	5	–
Oba Carr (USA)	13	8	4
Ike Quartey (GHA)	–	9	–
Jeff Malcolm (AUS)	–	10	–
Raul Frank (USA)	–	–	1
Frank Olsen (DEN)	18	–	6
Andrew Murray (USA)	–	–	7
Sam Garr (USA)	15	–	8
Scott Dixon (GB)	–	–	9

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)	C	–	–
Sharmba Mitchell (USA)	–	C	–
Zab Judah (USA)	–	–	C
Julio Cesar Chavez (MEX)	1	–	–
Oktay Urkal (TUR)	2	–	6
Diobelis Hurtado (CUB)	3	3	–

Miguel Angel Gonzalez (MEX)	4	2	–
Mickey Ward (USA)	5	12	8
Arturo Gatti (CAN)	6	–	–
Gianluca Branco (ITA)	7	–	–
Vince Phillips (USA)	8	–	–
Ahmed Santos (USA)	9	–	–
Mikhail Krivolapov (RUS)	10	–	–
Hector Camacho Jr (PR)	–	1	5
Thomas Damgaard (DEN)	–	4	7
Khalid Rahilou (FRA)	–	5	–
Fred Pendleton (USA)	–	6	–
Gabriel Mapuoka (FRA)	19	7	10
Junichi Ono (JAP)	–	8	–
Demetrio Ceballos (PAN)	–	9	–
Elio Ortiz (VEN)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Allan Vester (DEN)	22	–	3
Cesar Leiva (ARG)	–	–	4
Jan Bergman (SA)	–	–	9

LIGHTWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Steve Johnston (USA)	C	–	–
Gilbert Serrano (VEN)	–	C	–
Paul Spadafora (USA)	–	–	C
Lawrence Ngobeni (SA)	1	–	–
Cesar Bazan (MEX)	2	–	4
Lovemore Ndou (SA)	3	–	6
Rick Yoshimura (JAP)	4	4	–
Hector Camacho Jr (USA)	5	–	–
Billy Schwer (GB)	6	–	–
Daomai Sithkodam (THAI)	7	–	–
Julien Lorcy (FRA)	8	2	5
Ivan Robinson (USA)	9	–	3
James Leija (USA)	10	–	9
Vacant	–	1	–
Alberto Sicurella (ARG)	11	3	–
Oscar Garcia Cano (SPA)	15	5	–
Stefano Zoff (ITA)	–	6	–
Golden Johnson (USA)	–	7	–
Miguel Calist (PAN)	–	8	–
Jean-Baptiste Mendy (FRA)	14	9	–
Raul Balbi (ARG)	–	10	–
Billy Irwin (CAN)	21	–	1
Joel Perez (USA)	–	–	2
George Scott (SWE)	–	–	7
Stephane Smith (GB)	–	–	8
Wilfrido Ruiz (USA)	–	–	10

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Floyd Mayweather (USA)	C	–	–
Jongkwon Baek (KOR)	–	C	–
Diego Corrales (USA)	–	–	C
Goyo Vargas (MEX)	1	–	–
Jesus Chavez (USA)	2	–	9
Sirimongkol Singmanassuk (THAI)	3	–	–
Kengo Nagashima (JAP)	4	–	–
Boris Sinitsin (RUS)	5	9	–
Tiger Ari (PHIL)	6	–	–
Carlos Hernandez (EL SALV)	7	–	–
Robert Garcia (USA)	8	12	5
Alejandro Gonzalez (MEX)	9	–	–
Julio Alvarez (MEX)	10	–	–
Joel Casamayor (CUB)	–	1	–
Lakva Sim (MON)	–	2	–
Yodsanan Nanthachai (THAI)	–	3	–
Yong Soo Choi (KOR)	–	4	–
Derrick Gainer (USA)	–	5	1
Tontcho Tontchev (BUL)	22	6	–
Takanori Hatakeyama (JAP)	–	7	–
Ernesto Zepeda (MEX)	30	8	–
Kyuchul Choi (KOR)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	2
Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)	25	–	3
Harold Warren (USA)	–	–	4
Carlos Hernandez (USA)	–	–	6
Santos Rebolledo (VEN)	–	–	7
Luis Navarro (USA)	–	11	8
John Brown (USA)	–	–	10

FEATHERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Vacant	C	–	–
Fred Norwood (USA)	–	C	–
Paul Ingle (GB)	–	–	C
Luisito Espinosa (PHIL)	1	8	–
Guty Espadas (MEX)	2	–	–
Injin Chi (KOR)	3	–	–
Cesar Soto (MEX)	4	–	–
Tony Wehbee (AUS)	5	–	9
Edgar Barcenas (MEX)	6	–	–
Istvan Kovacs (HUN)	7	6	–
Takeo Imaoka (JAP)	8	–	–
Augie Sanchez (USA)	9	–	7
Steve Robinson (GB)	10	–	–
Pablo Chacon (ARG)	–	1	3
Nana Konadu (GHA)	–	2	–
Victor Polo (COL)	–	3	8
Angel Vasquez (PR)	–	4	10
Philip Ndou (SA)	–	5	–
Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)	14	7	–
Richard Carrillo (VEN)	–	9	–
Frederic Perez (FRA)	20	10	–
Vuyani Bungu (SA)	–	–	1
Mbulelo Botile (SA)	–	–	2
Frankie Toledo (USA)	–	–	4
Oscar Larios (MEX)	–	–	5
Manuel Medina (MEX)	18	–	6

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Erik Morales (MEX)	C	–	–
Nestor Garza (MEX)	–	C	–
Lehlo Ledwaba (SA)	–	–	C
Michael Brodie (GB)	1	6	3
Willie Jorrin (USA)	2	–	4
Sergei Devakov (UKR)	3	–	–
Oscar Larios (MEX)	4	–	–
Wayne McCullough (IRE)	5	–	–
Manny Pacquaio (PHIL)	6	–	–
Salim Medjkoune (FRA)	7	–	8
Enrique Sanchez (MEX)	8	9	–
Israel Vazquez (MEX)	9	–	–
Shin Yamato (JAP)	10	–	–
Antonio Cermeno (VEN)	–	1	–
Yobert Ortega (VEN)	22	2	–
Bugiarso (INDO)	–	3	–
Vladislav Antonov (RUS)	–	4	6
Jose Luis Valbuena (VEN)	–	5	–
Guty Espadas (MEX)	–	7	11
Jose Rojas (VEN)	–	8	–
John Johnson (USA)	15	10	9
Ernesto Gray (COL)	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Jesus Salud (USA)	–	–	5
Agapito Sanchez (DR)	18	–	7
Jason Pires (USA)	–	–	10

BANTAMWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Veerapol Sahaprom (THAI)	C	–	–
Paul Ayala (USA)	–	C	–
Tim Austin (USA)	–	–	C
Adan Vargas (MEX)	1	2	4
Hugo Dianzo (MEX)	2	9	–
Cuauhtemoc Gomez (MEX)	3	6	8
Jess Maca (PHIL)	4	10	–
Gerardo Martinez (MEX)	5	–	–
Nana Konadu (GHA)	6	–	5
Ricardo Barajas (MEX)	7	–	–
Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)	8	–	–
Keiji Yamaguchi (JAP)	9	–	–
Francisco Mateos (MEX)	10	–	–
Vacant	–	1	–
Sahoiu Sithchai Condo (THAI)	–	3	–
Johnny Bredahl (DEN)	–	4	–
Danny Romero (USA)	–	5	–
Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)	–	7	–
Rafael Marquez (MEX)	13	8	12
Jesus Perez (COL)	21	–	1
Arthur Johnson (USA)	12	–	2
Jose Mendoza (COL)	–	–	3
Pete Frissina (USA)	23	–	6
Noel Wilders (GB)	22	–	7
Mauricio Martinez (PAN)	–	–	9
Steve Dotse (GHA)	26	–	10

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
In Joo Cho (KOR)	C	–	–
Hideki Todaka (JAP)	–	C	–
Vacant	–	–	C
Eric Morel (USA)	1	–	–
Gerry Penalosa (PHIL)	2	–	8
Joel Luna Zarate (MEX)	3	9	10
Heriberto Ruiz (MEX)	4	–	6
Dimitri Kirilov (RUS)	5	–	–
Masanori Tokuyama (JAP)	6	–	–
Seungrok Choi (KOR)	7	–	–
Trinidad Mendoza (MEX)	8	12	–
Fernando Montiel (MEX)	9	–	–
Reynaldo Hurtado (COL)	10	–	–
Leo Gamez (VEN)	–	1	–
Saen Sow Ploenchit (THAI)	–	2	4
Yokthai Sithoar (THAI)	–	3	5
Jesus Rojas (VEN)	–	4	–
Edison Torres (VEN)	–	5	–
Felix Machado (VEN)	–	6	2
Jesper Jensen (DEN)	–	7	–
Akihigo Nago (JAP)	–	8	–
Lester Fuentes (NIC)	22	10	–
Julio Gamboa (NIC)	–	–	1
Luis Bolanos (COL)	–	–	3
Raul Juarez (MEX)	–	–	7
Francisco Tejedor (COL)	–	–	9

FLYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Medgoen Singsurat (THAI)	C	–	–
Sornpichai Kratchingdaeng (THAI)	–	C	–
Irene Pacheco (COL)	–	–	C
Chatchai Sasakul (THAI)	1	–	–
Alex Ali Baba (GHA)	2	–	7
David Guerault (FRA)	3	5	1
Gabriel Mira (MEX)	4	–	–
Mike Trejo (USA)	5	11	4
Saen Sor Ploenchit (THAI)	6	–	–
Alejandro Montiel (MEX)	7	10	3
Hiroshi Nakano (JAP)	8	–	–
Damaen Kelly (GB)	9	–	–
Oscar Arciniega (MEX)	10	–	–
Jose Bonilla (VEN)	–	1	–
Gilberto Gonzalez (VEN)	–	2	11
Denkaosaen Kaowitch (THAI)	–	3	–
Panieng Okuda (THAI)	–	4	–
Eric Morel (USA)	–	6	–
Hugo Soto (ARG)	–	7	12
Jose Lopez (VEN)	–	8	–
Gilberto Keb Baas (MEX)	11	9	–
Vacant	–	–	2
Zoltan Lunka (TUR)	21	–	5
Pedro Pena (USA)	–	–	6
Jose Landin (USA)	–	–	8
Angel Priolo (COL)	–	–	9
Ferid Ben Jeddou (TUN)	–	–	10

JR. FLYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Yosam Choi (KOR)	C	–	–
Pichitnoi C. Siriwat (THAI)	–	C	–
Ricardo Lopez (MEX)	–	–	C
Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)	1	3	5
Jorge Arce (MEX)	2	7	10
Saman Sorjaturong (THAI)	3	9	–
Hidenobu Honda (JAP)	4	2	–
Panieng Sasiprabha (THAI)	5	–	–
Bebis Mendoza (COL)	6	–	–
Jose Luis Zepeda (MEX)	7	–	–
Eric Ortiz (MEX)	8	–	–
Pongsaklek Wonjongkam (THAI)	9	–	–
Nelson Dieppa (DR)	10	8	–
Rosendo Alvarez (NIC)	–	1	–
Pongsaklek Nakornton (THAI)	–	4	–
Yura Dimas (MON)	–	5	–
Jose Sanjuanelo (COL)	–	6	–
Ratanapol Sor Vorapin (THAI)	–	10	4
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Will Grigsby (USA)	–	11	3
Pongsaklek Sithkanongsak (THAI)	–	–	6
Jake Matlala (SA)	–	–	7
Alex Sanchez (PR)	–	–	8
Domingo Guillen (DR)	–	–	9

STRAWWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Jose Antonio Aguirre (MEX)	C	–	–
Noel Arumbulet (VEN)	–	C	–
Zolani Petelo (SA)	–	–	C
Daniel Reyes (COL)	1	5	6
Erdene Chuluun (MON)	2	–	–
Wandee Chor Chareon (THAI)	3	–	–
Yasuo Tokimitsu (JAP)	4	–	11
Udomdet Porpaoin (THAI)	5	7	–
Hiroshi Nakajima (JAP)	6	–	8
Fernando Luna (MEX)	7	–	–
Jaewon Kim (KOR)	8	–	–
Makoto Suzuki (JAP)	9	12	–
Manny Melchor (PHIL)	10	–	–
Jose Garcia (COL)	–	1	–
Hurricane Chulun (IND)	–	2	–
Songkram Porpaoin (THAI)	–	3	–
Chana Porpaoin (THAI)	–	4	–
Atsushi Sai (JAP)	–	6	–
Hiroshi Matsumoto (JAP)	16	8	–
Satoru Abe (JAP)	17	9	–
Fasan Pongsawan (THAI)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Mickey Cantwell (GB)	–	–	3
Rocky Palma (JAP)	–	–	4
Faisol Akbar (INDO)	–	–	5
Alberto Rossel (PERU)	–	–	7
Rocky Lim (TWN)	–	–	9
Juan Herrera (COL)	–	–	10

RING CLASSIC

LEONARD AT FINAL CROSSROADS?

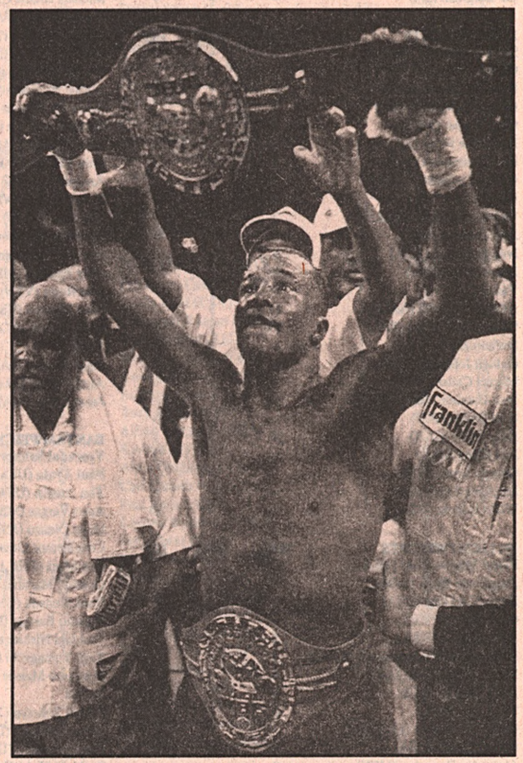
Hearns Next For Sugar Ray, But History Beckons

By Nigel Collins

(Editor's Note: This is a condensed version)

For those who still don't understand why Sugar Ray Leonard continues to fight, the expression on his face immediately after he stopped Donny Lalonde supplied the answer.

It was the look of rapture. For a frenzied minute of unadulterated joy, Leonard abandoned his usual conservative posture and cut loose in an unrestrained victory celebration. He jumped up on the ropes, thrust his fists toward the heavens, and soaked in the adulation of his adoring public. This was the moment that made it all worthwhile, worth all the work and all the risks, an ultimate high only the ring can provide him. And if you looked into his eyes at that instant, you knew not only why he fights on, but that he would surely fight again.



Basking in the cheers of the Caesars Palace crowd, Sugar Ray Leonard holds aloft one of the two WBC titles he won by defeating Donny Lalonde. In doing so, Leonard became the first ever five-division world champion.

Leonard can no more stay away from the boxing ring than his fellow multimillionaires Frank Sinatra and Bob Hope can stay away from the stage. And while geriatric entertainers don't field too many overhand rights to the head, the syndrome is basically the same. After a certain point, money, though important, is not the driving force. No, the overpowering motivation for men like Leonard is to keep doing the thing that gives them their greatest pleasure, their very identity. And for all his cosmopolitan airs, Leonard remains, first and foremost—a fighter.

Then again, perhaps the comparison to Hope and Sinatra isn't altogether fair to Leonard. For though he may have slowed down half a step, Sugar Ray retains much of the magic that has made him the finest boxer of the post-Ali generation. And while he may have alienated some with his dilettante-like attitude toward the sport in recent years, many of us still feel privileged to watch his artistry whenever the opportunity arises.

This time Leonard, 32, promised no retirement announcements, and so far he's kept his word, saying only that he wanted to go home, relish his latest triumph, and enjoy the holiday season before deciding his next move. Nevertheless, even before the first bell sounded for his bout with Lalonde, rumors of a rematch with Thomas Hearns were already flying almost as fast as Leonard's fists.

Three nights prior to Leonard's knockout of Lalonde, Hearns barely managed to survive 12 rugged rounds with James Kinchen, coming away with a hotly disputed decision. On the strength of nostalgia, as much as this questionable victory, Hearns probably finally will get the one fight he's been dreaming of since Leonard handed him his first defeat back in 1981.

While Leonard has enjoyed nothing but success since that memorable encounter, Hearns' life inside the ropes has been a turbulent rollercoaster ride. Losing to Marvelous Marvin Hagler in one of boxing history's most glorious punchouts didn't hurt his standing too much, but the knockout defeat to Iran Barkley made lots of folks figure it was time for Tommy to hang up his gloves. The close call against Kinchen did little to dispel this notion.

Though he stopped short of confirming a rematch with Hearns, Leonard took the precaution of providing his old foe with an alibi for his shaky performance against Kinchen.

"Hearns' problem has been he thinks about me more than he thinks about his opponent," informed Mr. Modesty. "He thought about me before the Barkley fight and he thought about me before he fought Kinchen. I made that mistake once, when I fought Kevin Howard."

Speculation arose quickly that Leonard would meet rival Thomas Hearns in a rematch to their 1981 classic soon after Sugar Ray's victory over Lalonde. It was thought that a Hearns-Leonard bout would enliven a moribund light heavyweight class.

Certainly, Hearns' recent form has taken some of the luster off their long-awaited encore, but the bout retains a marketable amount of marquee value and is the most logical next step in Leonard's storybook career. However, if Leonard is interested in his eventual place in boxing annals, he's in a perfect position to attempt a feat far more challenging than beating the rickety "Hit Man." In fact, Leonard is standing on the threshold of history, and nobody seems to have noticed.

Lost among the insulting hype about five so-called world championships and two-for-the-price-of-one title bouts is the fact that Leonard is now within punching range of joining Henry Armstrong and Bob Fitzsimmons in boxing's most exclusive club—fighters who have won legitimate world titles in three of boxing's traditional eight weight divisions.

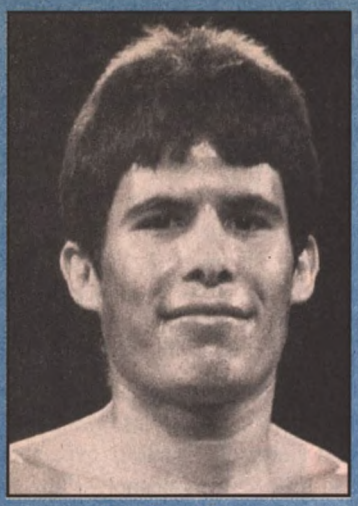
All he has to do is unify the light heavyweight title.

Even though Leonard said the Lalonde fight proved to him he wasn't a light heavyweight, he's been known to change his mind before. Unifying the 175-pound crown would be an achievement unparalleled since the incomparable Armstrong simultaneously held the featherweight, lightweight, and welterweight titles in 1938. It would also provide Leonard with the opportunity to accomplish something that eluded even his peerless namesake. For when Sugar Ray Robinson melted in a sauna known as Yankee Stadium on a sweltering July night in 1952, so did his dream of adding the light heavyweight belt to the welter and middleweight crowns already in his collection.

A lumpy-looking, light-punching bag of guile and guts named Joey Maxim stood between Robinson and his triple crown. A couple of capable gentlemen by the names of "Prince" Charles Williams and Virgil Hill stand in the path of Leonard and boxing's greatest hat trick. The resurrected Williams owns the IBF third of the title, while Olympic late-bloomer Hill holds down the fort over in WBA-ville. Both appear to be at least as good as Lalonde, if not better.

From The Ring, March 1989

THE RING RATINGS, March 1989



Julio Cesar Chavez

HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Mike Tyson, New York
1. **Evander Holyfield**, Georgia
2. **Carl Williams**, New Jersey
3. **Adilson Rodrigues**, Brazil
4. **Tim Witherspoon**, Pennsylvania
5. **Michael Dokes**, Ohio
6. **Donovan Ruddock**, Canada
7. **Tony Tucker**, Michigan
8. **Orlin Norris**, California
9. **James Douglas**, Ohio
10. **Pinklon Thomas**, Michigan

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **Charles Williams**, Ohio
2. **Virgil Hill**, North Dakota
3. **Ray Leonard**, Maryland
4. **Dennis Andries**, England
5. **Don Lalonde**, Canada
6. **Tony Willis**, Illinois
7. **Bobby Czyz**, New Jersey
8. **Lindell Holmes**, Michigan
9. **Graciano Rocchigiani**, Germany
10. **Joe Lasisi**, Nigeria

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
World Champ: Sumbu Kalambay, Italy
1. **Michael Nunn**, California
2. **Iran Barkley**, New York
3. **Ray Leonard**, Maryland
4. **Thomas Hearns**, Michigan
5. **Herol Graham**, England
6. **Mike McCallum**, Jamaica
7. **Robert Hines**, Pennsylvania
8. **Donald Curry**, Texas
9. **Julian Jackson**, Virgin Islands
10. **Matthew Hilton**, Canada

WELTERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Lloyd Honeyghan, England
1. **Simon Brown**, Washington, D.C.
2. **Tomas Molinares**, Colombia
3. **Marlon Starling**, Connecticut
4. **Maurice Blocker**, Washington, D.C.
5. **Roger Mayweather**, Nevada
6. **Mark Breland**, New York
7. **Meldrick Taylor**, Pennsylvania
8. **Harold Brazier**, Indiana
9. **Manning Galloway**, Ohio
10. **Juan Martin Coggi**, Argentina

LIGHTWEIGHTS
World Champ: Julio Cesar Chavez, Mexico
1. **Greg Haugen**, Washington
2. **Pernell Whitaker**, Virginia
3. **Jose Luis Ramirez**, Mexico
4. **Edwin Rosario**, Puerto Rico
5. **Amancio Castro**, Colombia
6. **Azumah Nelson**, Ghana
7. **Tony Lopez**, California
8. **Anthony Jones**, Michigan
9. **Rocky Lockridge**, New Jersey
10. **Brian Mitchell**, South Africa

FEATHERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Antonio Esparragoza, Venezuela
1. **Jeff Fenech**, Australia
2. **Jorge Paez**, Mexico
3. **Calvin Grove**, Pennsylvania
4. **Marcos Villasana**, Mexico
5. **Juan Jose Estrada**, Mexico
6. **Jeff Franklin**, Nevada
7. **Hector Lopez**, Mexico
8. **Jesus Poll**, California
9. **Louie Espinosa**, Arizona
10. **Jose Sanabria**, Venezuela

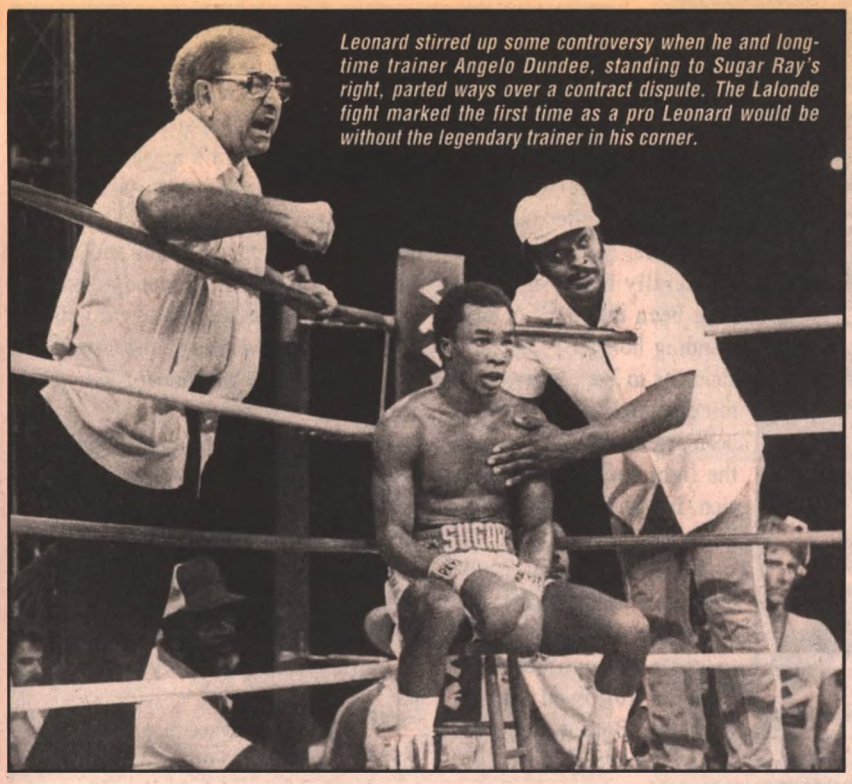
BANTAMWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **Raul Perez**, Mexico
2. **Khaosai Galaxy**, Thailand
3. **Miguel Lora**, Colombia
4. **Gilberto Roman**, Mexico
5. **Orlando Canizales**, Texas
6. **Sung-Kil Moon**, South Korea
7. **Juan Carazo**, Puerto Rico
8. **Santos Laciar**, Argentina
9. **Kelvin Seabrooks**, South Carolina
10. **Khaokor Galaxy**, Thailand

FLYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Yong-Kang Kim, Korea
1. **Jung-Koo Chang**, South Korea
2. **Sot Chitalada**, Thailand
3. **Fidel Bassa**, Colombia
4. **Myung-Woo Yuh**, South Korea
5. **Hilario Zapata**, Panama
6. **Duke McKenzie**, England
7. **Dodie Penalosa**, Philippines
8. **Miguel Mercedes**, Dominican Republic
9. **Humberto Gonzalez**, Mexico
10. **Ray Medel**, Texas

Critics have frequently accused Leonard of picking his spots, looking for any easy mark to stroke his ego and fatten his bank account. Fighting Williams or Hill should silence any carping along those lines. A more feasible scenario would be Hill and Williams duking it out for the honor of meeting His Sweetness in a final showdown for the whole light heavyweight enchilada. Such a plan would enliven a semi-comatose division and give Leonard time to get reacquainted with Hearns in the meantime.

"To me a Leonard-Hearns rematch will be a lot like 'The Thrilla In Manila,'" said Rich Rose, president of Caesars World Sports. "It will be two great fighters in the twilight of their careers getting together one final time. While Hearns appears to be slipping a bit, I'm sure he'll really be up for Leonard. And if he sticks and moves, instead of going for the knockout, it could be a very competitive fight."

To say Caesars Palace is definitely



Leonard stirred up some controversy when he and long-time trainer Angelo Dundee, standing to Sugar Ray's right, parted ways over a contract dispute. The Lalonde fight marked the first time as a pro Leonard would be without the legendary trainer in his corner.

interested in the match would be an understatement.

How well Caesars Palace fared with the Leonard-Lalonde show is open to interpretation. Though the pay-per-view sold well (a record $19.5-million, according to distributor Titan Entertainment), the fight wasn't the box office bonanza to which Sugar Ray is accustomed. Caesars announced a crowd of 13,246 for a live gate of $7.5-million. However, the Nevada Athletic Commission claimed the actual paid attendance was 5,590, contributing only $2.8-million to the coffers. While Rose declined to comment on the discrepancy, one can assume the host casino padded the house with even more comps than usual.

Part of the problem surrounding the promotion was the general perception of Lalonde, 28, as a less-than-formidable opponent. This was fed, in part, by media grumbling, which focused on Lalonde instead of lampooning the phony titles supposedly at stake. This misguided criticism painted the Canadian "Golden Boy" as a no-hoper.

Despite the fact both Lalonde and the fight eventually proved eminently worthy, the aura of excitement that normally envelopes Las Vegas during a big fight was conspicuously absent. It isn't something you can really put your finger on, but the lack of a "buzz" was obvious soon after you stepped off the plane. Even the cabbies were strangely oblivious to the impending hostilities.

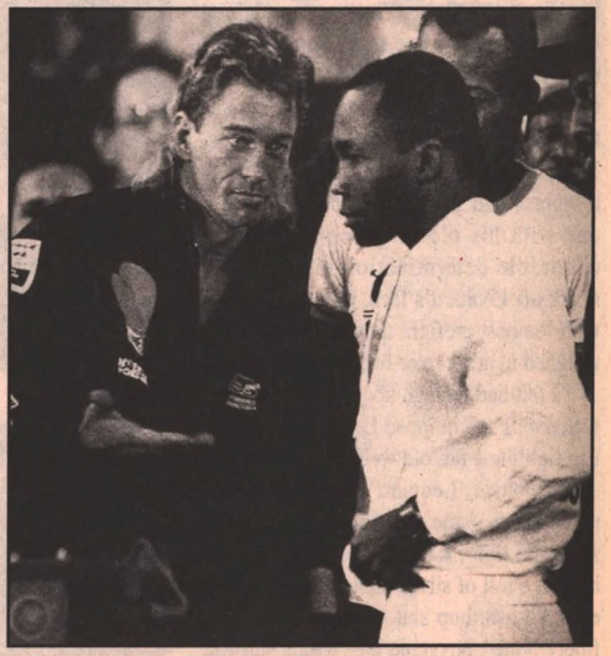
Leonard's popularity slipped a tad, partly because of the feeling that he was "butting in line" again, ahead of other, more active contenders. His image was further eroded when he split with long-time trainer Angelo Dundee. The parting of the ways came when Dundee wanted to have a lawyer negotiate his fee. Leonard and his attorney, Mike Trainer, took exception, and Dundee told them he wasn't working without a contract. It marked the first time Leonard had fought as a pro without Dundee in his corner, and many observers thought this may come back to haunt Ray if the going got tough.

As things worked out, when crunch time came, Leonard did just fine without the lovable Dundee present to give him counsel. Reliable hands Janks Morton, Dave Jacobs, and Jose Correa were more than equal to the task, and the Dundee controversy proved a non-factor.

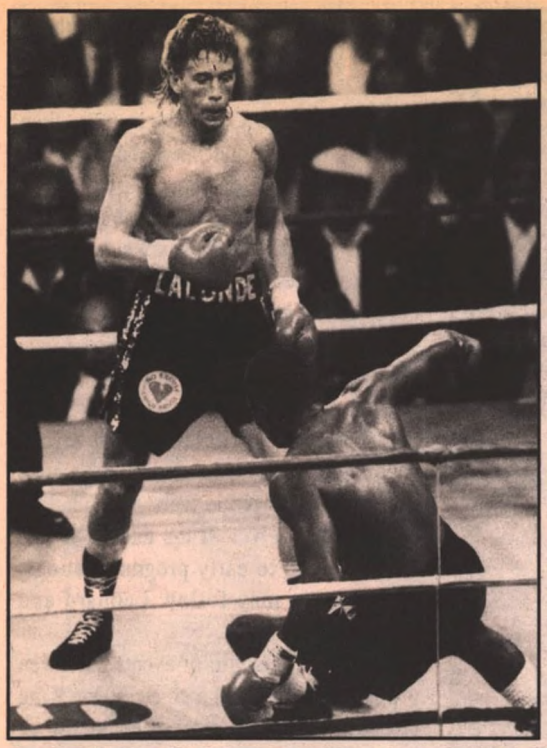
The appeal of Leonard's first adventure at such a high weight bracket was also slightly diluted by the attention given to the Hearns-Kinchen card. Cynics went so far as to suggest Bob Arum picked a date just three days prior as a thinly veiled effort to hurt the Leonard-Lalonde promotion. Top Rank's head honcho was reportedly miffed because Leonard and Lalonde turned down his bid in favor of promoting the bout themselves. If the television revenue lives up to early prognostications, more boxers may follow Leonard and Lalonde.

Naturally, this turn of events has given people like Arum and arch rival Don King plenty of food for thought. It could also be a stumbling block to a Leonard-Hearns rematch.

Leonard and Trainer have sworn never to work with Arum again, but Hearns and his manager, Emanuel Steward, have long been loyal to Arum. Though Hearns has enough money in the bank to risk alienating Uncle Bob, Steward has the rest of his Kronk stable to worry about. But with so many dollars at stake, it is unlikely Arum



There were frosty feelings between the Leonard and Lalonde camps. Here Lalonde offers Leonard his hand at their weigh-in, only to be ignored. Lalonde said before the fight, "I felt bad enough about fighting an old welterweight. But now I'm fighting a fat, old welterweight."



Lalonde gained instant credibility and at the same time shocked the Caesars Palace crowd by scoring a knockdown in the fourth round with a big right. The fall was only the second knockdown in Leonard's pro career.

would block the match. The most likely solution would be to pay Arum a hefty fee to step aside.

In spite of Leonard and Lalonde's business partnership, all was not sweetness and light between the camps in the weeks leading up to the fight. Trainer complained Lalonde failed to live up to some promotional obligations and was hurting the show. This hardly seemed to be the case as the countdown reached the final stages. The pride of Winnipeg was accessible to the press and generally impressed everyone with his pleasing personality and admirable determination to knock the smirk off Leonard's face. He also came up with the best prefight quote when Leonard weighed in at a career-high 165 pounds.

"I felt bad enough about fighting an old welterweight," quipped Lalonde. "But now I'm fighting a fat, old welterweight."

Of course, Leonard's weight, like so much of his game, was merely an illusion. After the fight, Ray claimed he'd weighed in with a roll of silver dollars in each pocket of his warmup suit. And looking at his finely honed physique and seeing his still dazzling speed, one has to take him at his word.

Lalonde, who always claimed he'd had to bulk up for his light heavyweight bouts, came in at an equally well-conditioned 167. When all was said and done, the need for a super middleweight class was even more dubious after the fight than before. The ability to beat a naturally bigger man has long been the mark of outstanding boxers. From Fitzsimmons to Dick Tiger, great middleweights have always been able to hold their own in the light heavyweight division. It was no different with Sugar Ray.

It was windy, and a mild chill blew off the desert. As challenger, Leonard was first to enter the outdoor ring. Lalonde followed shortly thereafter. Both were decked out in black outfits trimmed with gold.

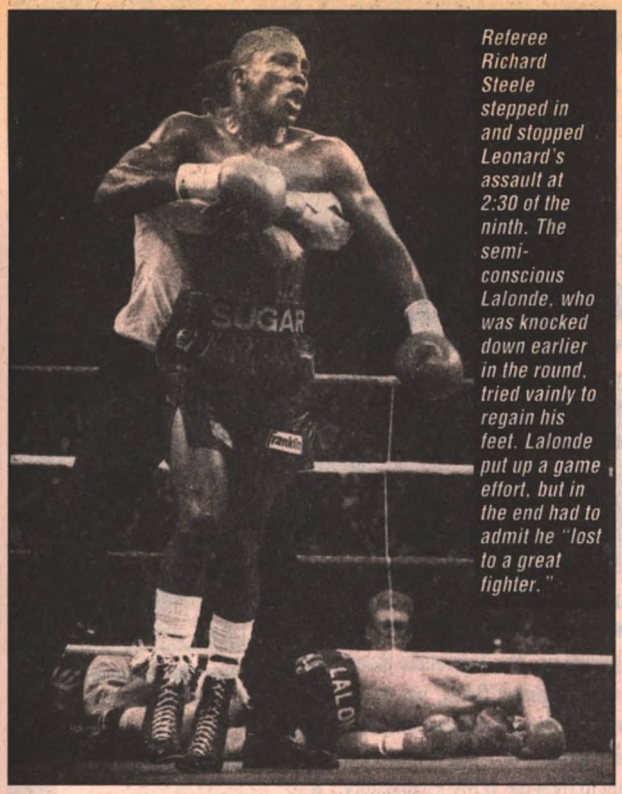
Lalonde was not awed. He plugged away from the outset, and when Leonard threw a semi-lazy left in the fourth, Donny answered with a hefty right, catching Ray on the side of his head. The punch was good enough to send Leonard sprawling to the canvas for only the second knockdown of his pro career. Leonard was up by the count of three, but the entire complexion of the bout had changed. It was as if someone had flipped a switch in Leonard's mindset. Forget about a boxing match, now it was a fight!

Leonard, seething but controlled, quickly cleaned the cobwebs and fought back with vigor. His jab found a home in Lalonde's face as their struggle built in intensity. At the bell, the crowd roared its approval for the adrenaline-pumping action.

Those who have doubted Leonard's love for down-and-dirty war in the trenches got a surprise in the fifth. Having his bell rung and his ego ruffled in the previous three minutes was probably the best thing that could have happened to him. Leonard rushed to re-establish his authority, moving inside behind his punishing left jab.

You could almost see the ring rust peeling away as Leonard opened up with both barrels. He plastered Lalonde with rapid-fire combinations, snapping his head back on his shoulders and sending sweat flying from his bleached blond hair. By the ninth, Leonard was not to be denied. He backed poor Donny into a corner and showed no mercy. A right twisted Lalonde's neck sideways, and a follow-up left put him

Leonard responded with fury over the next five rounds, mounting an attack that had Lalonde reeling. Leonard crashed a right into Lalonde's face, marking the end for the WBC light heavy champ.



Referee Richard Steele stepped in and stopped Leonard's assault at 2:30 of the ninth. The semi-conscious Lalonde, who was knocked down earlier in the round, tried vainly to regain his feet. Lalonde put up a game effort, but in the end had to admit he "lost to a great fighter."

down a second time in the round. He fell halfway out of the ring and lay briefly on the apron curled in a modified fetal position. Game to the last, Lalonde instinctively tried to regain his feet. But this time Steele had seen enough and stopped the carnage at 2:30. It was the only humane thing to do. The remaining half minute may have proved Lalonde's last on this planet.

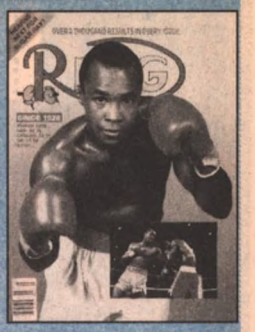
Thankfully, Lalonde seemed none the worse 20 minutes later. The man who had won as many fans in defeat as he had in all his previous victories was disappointed, but hardly despondent.

"I lost to a great fighter," admitted Lalonde, who saw his pro ledger dip to 31-3 (26). "Sugar Ray took a lot of good shots, he's just a little better fighter than I am. I expected a helluva fight out of Ray, but I was surprised by his durability."

Leonard, who raised his career totals to 35-1 (25), made it all sound so easy, but in truth it had been his most punishing outing since he TKO'd Hearns at the same venue seven years earlier. But such a hard-hitting slugfest also gave Leonard a chance to demonstrate to his detractors he could be as macho as the next guy. He didn't have to hit-and-run to win. Nobody could say the Lalonde bout was anything less than a fight. Not even those who think he stole the fight from Hagler can deny that Sugar Ray can still rumble.

It's impossible to deny Leonard's greatness. The only question that remains is the extent of his greatness. Leonard is at another crossroads. Perhaps his last. A second win over Hearns will pad his already bulging bank vault and silence a whole lot of "Hit Man" fans, but will do little to enhance his standing among boxing immortals. On the other hand, winning the light heavyweight title outright would be the jewel in his crown.

It's a proposition well worth considering, especially for a man whose gift has always proven equal to his ego. ■



The Cover: THE RING focused on Sugar Ray Leonard at an interesting crossroads in his career. After winning a fifth world championship, Leonard was surrounded by questions about possibly facing his old nemesis Tommy Hearns again. Leonard answered any doubts about whether he still had something left by disposing of gutsy Canadian Donny Lalonde.

Major Moments: The historical importance of certain bouts were examined. One included this tragic affair between Duk-Koo Kim and Ray Mancini in November 1982. Kim was killed, and because the fight occurred on a Saturday afternoon on national TV, it caused a stir across the country to ban boxing.

Prince In Exile: "Prince" Charles Williams, the IBF light heavyweight champ, took a tour of France and was looking to come back to the United States in hopes of finding a big fight—with a huge payday attached to it. Williams raised his pro record to 25-4-2 (17) with a victory over Frenchman Rufino Angulo.

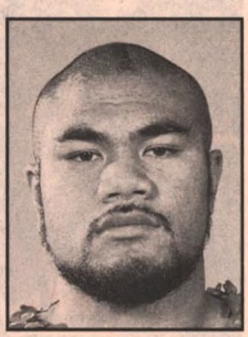
Hit Man Turns On The Heat: Thomas "Hit Man" Hearns held up his end of a possible rematch with Sugar Ray Leonard by narrowly defeating James Kinchen. Kinchen shook Hearns in the fourth and sixth rounds, but it was Hearns who came out on top in the end by a split decision.

Fighter Of The Month: Leonard proved he was not all hit-and-move. Sugar Ray still had some fight in him, coming off the deck in the fourth round to defeat the stubborn Lalonde to win the 168- and 175-pound WBC titles.

LOOKING AHEAD

By Eric Raskin

THE FRUSTRATION OF UNIFICATION



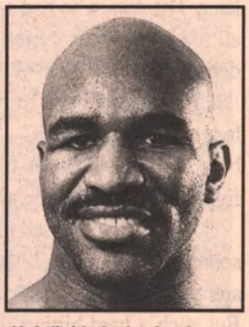
Tua: IBF mandatory's shot to come in the fall

Just because the rematch between **Lennox Lewis** and **Evander Holyfield** last November 13 gave boxing one heavyweight champion, it doesn't mean there's only one "world" heavyweight title. There are still three of those, and keeping them all together following the April 29 Lewis-**Michael Grant** clash will be a monumental challenge.

The WBC title is the easy one. They aren't forcing any mandatories down anyone's throat or threatening to strip anyone, and it doesn't look like they will be until this November. The IBF situation is only a little bit trickier. Their top-rated contender is **David Tua**, and regardless of who won the Lewis-Grant fight (it was still a few weeks away as we went to press), both agreed that a fight with Tua would either be signed by August or would go to purse bids at that time, meaning the Samoan's shot would come sometime in the fall.

But it's the WBA situation that is clouding the picture up. The Venezuela-based organization ruled in March that they wouldn't strip Lewis for fighting Grant, but they also made Lewis agree to fight their "leading available contender" no later than October 29 or forfeit the title. Of course, that date represents roughly the time period when Tua will be getting his shot, leaving July 15 as the HBO date that would be available for either Lewis or Grant to fight the WBA's mandatory.

The WBA's ratings, as of the end of February, see **John Ruiz** in the number-one spot, Holyfield at number two, and **Wladimir Klitschko** at number three. Further complicating matters is the fact that Ruiz and Holyfield are signed to fight on SET pay-per-view on June 10, and it's highly unlikely that the winner of that fight would be ready to challenge Lewis or Grant five weeks later. So maybe Ruiz will pull out to keep his title shot—which would likely lead to Holyfield suing him for breach of contract. Or maybe Klitschko will get the shot since he would fit the description of top "available" contender. As of press time, Grant had not agreed as Lewis had to the WBA's demands, and his manager, **Craig Hamilton**, was disgusted with the way the WBA was operating.



Holyfield: Jockeying for one last title try

"This is a shameless organization," Hamilton said. "They had Ruiz as their number-one contender, and when it was pointed out that, under their recently installed points-based ratings system, Holyfield should actually be number one, they changed the criteria for their rankings. They weighted more points to Ruiz' defenses of regional titles against mediocre opposition, keeping him at number one. At least the IBF, now that the people who have been indicted are out of there, are trying to do the right thing. We have made an agreement with the IBF and with Tua, and we will live up to that, but we're still waiting to see how the WBA situation plays out."

One of the sad potential side effects of this convoluted mess is that if Grant beats Lewis and decides not to meet the WBA's demands, Holyfield could make tremendously hollow history by becoming the only four-time heavyweight champion ever simply by beating the undistinguished Ruiz. Let's hope it doesn't come to that.

LISTEN UP

HBO and Showtime will be going head to head on May 20. While HBO offers a heavyweight doubleheader of **Oleg Maskaev** vs. **Kirk Johnson** and **Hasim Rahman** vs. **Corrie Sanders**, Showtime comes to us from Milan, Italy, with **Mike Tyson** vs. **Lou Savarese** and **Zab Judah's** first defense of the IBF junior welterweight title ... On the June 17 **Oscar De La Hoya-Shane Mosley** show, **Erik Morales** may make his featherweight debut on the undercard ... The second installment of HBO's new afternoon show, *KO Nation*, is scheduled for June 10, with Brazilian junior lightweight sensation **Acelino Freitas** and rising junior welter prospect **Hector Camacho Jr.** making their HBO debuts in separate bouts. The third scheduled date is in August, with a card featuring Olympian **Eric Morel** fighting at the University of Wisconsin in the works ... **Kostya Tszyu's** mandatory defense of the WBC 140-pound title against washed-up **Julio Cesar Chavez** is unfortunately going ahead, with a date of July 1 in Las Vegas on Showtime looking likely. Let's just pray Chavez' cornermen come with plenty of towels and aren't afraid to throw them. ■

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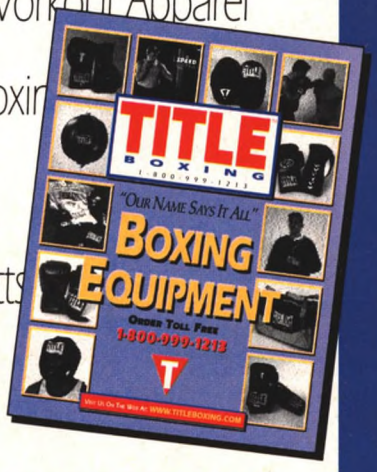

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